

Associate Editors: *Diane M. Billings, EdD, RN, FAAN, ANEF*  
*Karren Kowalski, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, ANEF, FAAN*  
Author: *Karren Kowalski, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, ANEF, FAAN*

## Creating Interprofessional Teams

### abstract

In an era where collaboration is integral to effective care of patients and families, staff development educators can have a powerful effect on interprofessional team development. This first article in a five-part Teaching Tips series emphasizes the work of creating competencies for such teams. It is neither effective nor advisable to create a group of people and tell them to go be a team. Knowledge, skills, and tools are helpful in creating such teams, which will be a focus of these next several Teaching Tips articles.

*J Contin Nurs Educ.* 2018;49(7):297-298.

**C**ollaborative, smoothly functioning, interprofessional teams are critical to the redesign of a somewhat chaotic health care system that has experienced difficulty in meeting high standards of quality and patient-centered care. For the purposes of this series of articles, an interprofessional team is defined as a group of professionals from at least three different health professions who work collaboratively to accomplish

specific patient care outcomes. To this end, and prior to the turn of the century, various health professions began considering the professional competencies that lead to smoothly functioning teams. This work evolved out of the National Interprofessional Competency Framework for Canada (Rogiers, 2007), the work of the World Health Organization, and the 2003 Institute of Medicine report (World Health Organization, 2010). In 2011, the Interprofessional Education Collaborative, consisting of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, American Dental Education Association, Association of Medical Colleges, and Association of Schools of Public Health, convened an expert panel to explore core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice. Their report, which was viewed as the key to the safe, high-quality, accessible, patient-centered care for all patients and families, served as the foundation for both interprofessional education and interprofessional practice. The work of the coalition in 2016 reaffirmed the original competencies (Interprofessional Education Collaborative, 2016).

In all areas of nursing practice, nurse educators and professional development nurses can use these recommendations to develop vibrant interprofessional teams for their respective facilities. Working together across disciplines in well-functioning teams can significantly increase the safety and quality of care to patients and communities. After the development of the core competencies (**Table**), Health Resources and Services Administration developed funding opportunities for interprofessional education and to create practices that incorporated these team competencies. Funding such projects is a reliable strategy that encourages change in practice.

In addition to funding, other factors can be used to support the development of interprofessional teams. These reinforcing factors include:

- An emphasis on quality-of-care supported by the theory that team or group problem-solving is more effective than a solo provider's problem-solving.
- A focus on the patient who expects help in navigating the complex health care system.
- Health reform that emphasizes financial incentives and a greater emphasis on prevention.
- An aging society with multiple chronic conditions which needs a team that coordinates care with a decrease in Emergency Department and hospital admissions.
- Rapidly evolving scientific knowledge which uses the expertise of

---

*Dr. Kowalski is President and CEO, The Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence, Denver, Colorado. The author has disclosed no potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise.*

*Address correspondence to Karren Kowalski, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, ANEF, FAAN, President and CEO, The Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence, 5290 E. Yale Circle, Suite 102, Denver, CO 80222; e-mail: karren.kowalski@att.net.*

*doi:10.3928/00220124-20180613-04*

**TABLE**  
**CORE COMPETENCIES FOR INTERPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE**

Core Competencies	Examples of Competencies in Action
Values and ethics for interprofessional practice	Act with honesty and integrity in relationships with patients, families, and other team members. Respect the dignity and privacy of patients, while maintaining confidentiality in the delivery of team-based care.
Roles and responsibilities for collaborative practice	Communicate roles and responsibilities to patients, families, and other professions. Explain the roles and responsibilities of other care providers and how the team works together to provide care.
Interprofessional communication	Choose effective communication tools and techniques, including information systems and communication technologies for facilitating discussions and interactions that enhance team function. Give timely, sensitive instructive feedback to others about their performance on the team and respond respectfully as a team member to feedback from others.
Interprofessional teamwork and team-based care	Engage other health professionals—appropriate to the specific care situation—in shared patient-centered problem-solving. Reflect on both individual and team performance improvement.

Adapted from Interprofessional Education Collaborative (2016).

each health professional to stay current with medical advances.

However, reports have indicated that interprofessional education does not necessarily translate into interprofessional practice. Statements such as “I know that’s what they taught you, but this is the real world and we’ve always done it this way” or “the physician is still the quarterback” do not lead to a change in how the practice websites function. However, professional development educators have an opportunity to work with various interprofessional team members, such as those in nursing, pharmacy, physical therapy, respiratory therapy, social work, nutrition, and medicine. Factors that serve as challenges to effective interprofessional teams include (a) the absence of positive role models, (b) reimbursement models that do not reimburse in a manner that supports the model, (c) traditional resistance to change, and (d) educational oppor-

tunities that are not supported with release time for training or appropriate space for training.

Strategies to address these restraining factors will be addressed in this series of Teaching Tips articles focusing on developing interprofessional teams. We will focus on the tools, exercises, and skills required to better understand oneself and what each person brings to the team. Skills such as effective communication with team members will be addressed. One article will focus on how trust is developed within a team. To this end, an article will focus on how relationships are built among team members. Within the two Health Resources and Services Administration grants that have supported interprofessional team development in Colorado, it has become clear that the students of the different professions have no clarity about the different roles and responsibilities of these professionals or how they might work together for the good

of the patient. These various teaching tips will be integrated to demonstrate some options regarding the development of teams and teamwork.

## REFERENCES

- Institute of Medicine. (2003). *Health professions education: A bridge to quality*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.
- Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel. (2011). *Core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice: Report of an expert panel*. Washington, DC: Interprofessional Education Collaborative.
- Interprofessional Education Collaborative. (2016). *Core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice: Report of an expert panel*. Washington, DC: Author. Retrieved from <https://nebula.wsimg.com/2f68a39520b03336b41038c370497473?AccessKeyId=DC06780E69ED19E2B3A5&disposition=0&alloworigin=1>
- Roegiers, X. (2007). Curricular reforms guide schools: But, where to? *PROSPECTS*, 37, 155-186.
- World Health Organization. (2010). *Framework for action on interprofessional education and collaborative practice*. Retrieved from [http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/framework\\_action/en/](http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/framework_action/en/)