

# EDITORIAL

## Interprofessional Education (IPE)

Aurora Denial, OD, FAAO



The World Health Organization (WHO) defines interprofessional education (IPE) as “the occasions when students from two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes.<sup>1</sup> The WHO first recognized the importance of IPE in 1978, more than 30 years ago.<sup>2</sup> Since

that time, interprofessional educational initiatives have been slowly introduced into healthcare programs. Recent changes in healthcare policy and delivery have led to an increased awareness of the importance of IPE. Changes in accreditation in many healthcare programs have led to IPE becoming a required competency.

*The Journal of Patient Safety* estimates that more than 400,000 patients each year, who go to the hospital for care, suffer some type of preventable harm that contributes to their death.<sup>3</sup> This makes medical errors the third leading cause of death in the United States. In 2001, the Institute of Medicine recommended redesigning systems and developing effective healthcare teams to achieve care that is patient-centered and supported by evidence-based decision-making.<sup>4</sup> The systems would also take into account patient safety, avoidance of injury, time, efficiency and fairness.<sup>4</sup>

Improving the healthcare system and reducing medical errors is a goal for the future. Many organizations feel that IPE is a mechanism to achieve this goal.<sup>5,6,7</sup> Effective teamwork implies that all members of the team have a vested interest in the outcome of the patient’s care. In the past, many healthcare professionals worked in isolated silos. Although collaboration in patient care has always been common, this may or may not imply a vested interest in the patient’s outcome and

still leaves room for isolation. Interprofessional education leading to interprofessional patient care will require a shift in culture. The shift reflects thinking within the framework of an autonomous professional vs. as a professional working within a team.

Culture changes are usually slow to take hold and are often met with challenges. The challenges associated with IPE include practicality in scheduling, time to bring students together, finding other professional schools to partner with, administrative support and faculty training. Information about interprofessional education is plentiful. Using the words interprofessional education in a Google search produced almost 2 million entries. There are also many journals and conferences dedicated to the topic. I recently had the opportunity to attend the 2014 Interprofessional Education Collaborative Conference in Virginia. This three-day conference provided information, resources, examples of ongoing projects, consultation with experts in the field, and an opportunity to develop curricula and projects for our students. The conference participants included faculty from multiple healthcare professions, including optometry.

Optometric education provides the knowledge, skills and role-modeling for future practitioners, but how do education and the profession of optometry fit into IPE and ultimately interprofessional practice? The profession is mainly practiced in outpatient settings, often in private or commercial practices. These practice modalities often lead to isolation. Will future changes in healthcare practice necessitate that all practitioners accept and embrace working within a team? The AOA Code of Ethics states “it should be the duty of all optometrist to keep their patient’s eye, vision and general health paramount at all times.”<sup>8</sup> The ability to accomplish this task may require the ability to work within a healthcare team. As educators, it is our job to prepare students for the future.

Optometric education has shown a strong interest in inter-professional education. In this edition of the journal (see below), I invite all faculty members to participate in a future theme edition, which will focus on all aspects of interprofessional education. The sharing of accomplishments, lessons

learned and outcomes will help others striving to implement IPE into their curriculum. This is an opportunity to showcase how the profession of optometry education is moving forward and embracing a culture change.

## References

1. Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice. Geneva: World Health Organization; [cited on January 24, 2014]. Available from: [http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/framework\\_action/en/](http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/framework_action/en/).
2. Alma-Ata 1978: Primary Health Care, Report of the International Conference on Primary Healthcare. World Health Organization. 6-12 September 1978: Alma-Ata, USSR.
3. James J. A new evidence based estimate of patient harms associated with hospital care. *Journal of Patient Safety*. 2013; Volume 9, Issue: p122-128.
4. Crossing the Quality Chiasm: A new health system for the 21st century. Washington, DC. National Institute of Health; [cited on January 25, 2014]. Available from: <http://www.acmq.org/education/iomsummary.pdf>.
5. Health Professions Education: A Bridge to Quality. Washington, DC. Institute of Medicine; 2003[cited January 24, 2014]. Available from: <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2003/health-professions-education-a-bridge-to-quality.aspx>.
6. Working Together for Health: The World Health Report, 2006. Geneva: World Health Organization; [cited on January 24, 2014]. Available from: <http://www.who.int/whr/2006/en/>.
7. Interprofessional Education. Prevention Education Resource Center. Washington, DC. [cited on January 25, 2014]. Available from: <http://www.teachprevention.org/interprofessional.php>.
8. Code of Ethics. American Optometric Association, St Louis [cited on January 24, 2014]. Available from: <http://www.aoa.org/about-the-aoa/ethics-and-values/code-of-ethics>.



## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT 2014 EDUCATIONAL STARTER GRANT PROGRAM

The Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry (ASCO) and The Vision Care Institute, LLC, an affiliate of Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Inc., are pleased to announce the offering of the 2014 Educational Starter Grants. The grants have been offered over the past three years and are dedicated to supporting educational research. This is a great opportunity for faculty to get involved in doing educational research, which can impact teaching, student learning and the profession.

Information about the grants, past successful grant proposals and the current application can be found on the ASCO website at <http://www.opted.org/grant-and-award-opportunities/>.

## INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN AN UPCOMING THEME EDITION

*Optometric Education* is announcing a future theme edition, which will focus on all aspects of interprofessional education. The deadline to submit articles for this theme edition is Aug. 30, 2014. For additional information on the theme edition contact Dr. Aurora Denial at [deniala@neco.edu](mailto:deniala@neco.edu).