

Health students eager for multidisciplinary teamwork opportunities

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Objective: Evaluate the first inter-professional health student networking and skills night in Canberra.

Design: Evaluation survey.

Setting: Inter-professional health student night at The Canberra Hospital, A.C.T.

Participants: University health students from Australian National University, Australian Catholic University and University of Canberra.

Intervention: Three hour inter-professional health student night involving ten multidisciplinary health student teams rotating through eleven clinical skills stations.

Relevance: Effective multidisciplinary care is the key to maintaining patient safety and providing comprehensive patient centred care. Current rural health professional shortages amplify the need for improved collaboration between health disciplines. However university programs to promote health student multidisciplinary teamwork are limited. This compromises the ability for health students to successfully work together in their future health professional careers.

The Inter-professional health student networking and skills night is a joint rural health club initiative of ANU Rural Medical Society and Canberra Rural Allied health and Nursing Collective. It aimed to improve knowledge of other health professions, promote networking and provide exposure to multidisciplinary teamwork. The evaluation explores student perception, satisfaction and future ideas for multidisciplinary initiatives.

Results: Of the fifty-six participants, most were in the first (46%) or second (25%) year of their degrees. Participants were predominantly female (77%). Paramedicine (18%), Pharmacy (18%), Medicine (16%), Nursing (14%) and Occupational Therapy (9%) accounted for three-quarters of the health students present.

On evaluation, the majority of participants (61%) had little experience with other health disciplines prior to the event. Afterwards, participants (96%) noted an increase in knowledge of other health professional's scope of practice. Similarly, participants (88%) agreed the event improved how they would approach their future work environment. Participants (95%) found the event allowed sufficient opportunities to network. Overwhelmingly, participants (98%) would recommend the event to other health students and were overall satisfied with the evening.

On qualitative analysis, participants expressed the most useful aspects of the evening were the hands-on activities, inter-professional contact and opportunity for teamwork. More time was the most common theme for improvement. Participant comments strongly supported future multidisciplinary clinical skills nights and further networking opportunities.

Conclusions: The inter-professional night provided a successful opportunity for health students to network and gain knowledge about other health professionals. The interactive, teamwork and inter-professional aspects of the event were highly valued. Health student comments clearly supported the need for greater multidisciplinary teamwork opportunities at a university level.