Experiences of Undergraduate Nursing and Physiotherapy Students Undertaking Interprofessional Team-based Learning Activities

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Introduction:
Traditional discipline-specific training has been suggested to hinder healthcare students from learning holistic patient care and interprofessional communication. To address this issue, two local universities piloted an Interprofessional team-based learning (IPTBL) course in 2016 and 2017 to let medical, nursing, and allied health students form teams to collaboratively solve hypothetical clinical vignettes. The current qualitative study aimed to evaluate the learning experience of nursing and physiotherapy undergraduates following the IPTBL activities.

Method:
Between 2016 and 2017, 27 third-year nursing and physiotherapy undergraduates were recruited by purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and written feedback were solicited until data saturation was achieved. Verbatim interview transcription were then coded, categorised and compared independently to uncover common themes. Each theme was mutually-exclusive by using an inductive thematic analysis until they reached a consensus.

Findings:
All students expressed positive learning experiences. Three main themes were emerged: (1) process of interprofessional learning; (2) professional-related outcome of interprofessional learning; and (3) patient-related outcome of interprofessional learning. ‘Process of interprofessional learning’ was related to students recognizing their values in a team. It included three sub-themes: ‘participation and involvement in discussion’ and ‘mutual respect’ and ‘peer learning and support’. ‘Professional-related outcome of interprofessional learning’ referred to students understood and compared their roles and trainings with other healthcare students; it comprised two sub-themes: ‘knowing others’ and ‘knowing self’. ‘Patient-related outcome of interprofessional learning’ referred to students exploring the most suitable interdisciplinary, holistic care for patients through effective interactions; it involved two sub-themes: ‘expanded perspective in holistic care’ and ‘exploring care options’.

Conclusion:
The IPTBL enhanced students’ learning experience through interactive learning with other healthcare students. A well-designed learner-driven activity improves students’ awareness of their values and professionalism. Trustful and complementary relationships allow students to develop self-competence in knowledge transfer and interprofessional collaboration in providing holistic patient-centred care.