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Research Question

Is a patient-centric approach more effective than a problem-centric approach when treating a patient in an interprofessional health setting?

Introduction

In order to effectively treat a patient, collaborating with other health professions is essential. In the United States alone, there are hundreds of health occupations that work together to provide the best possible care to a patient. Each individual field is equally important in giving people the care they deserve. Here at UNE, there are 13 health programs, 9 of which are represented through the Interprofessional Team Immersion series (IPTI). IPTI is a simulated patient experience in which students of different health programs collaborate to treat a simulated patient. Although this isn't a real patient encounter, it forces the students to respond as if it is. In this learning experience, choosing the correct treatment approach is vital to the success of the simulation.

In patient care, there are 2 viable options for treatment: a patient-centric approach and a problem-centric approach. The former treats the patient as a whole, taking into consideration all the information the patient provides. The latter focuses on the individual symptoms of the patient and determines the most effective way to treat these symptoms. Through IPTI, we were able to test both approaches and determine which one was more effective in an interprofessional setting.

Alex and The Team

Alex Simpson is in her mid-20s, unsheltered and experiencing unemployment, with family history of substance use. Alex was referred to our clinic from a dental office where she reported continued dental pain, anxiety, intermittent vertigo, and gastric symptoms. She presented to our clinic for further psychosocial clinical evaluation.

Our task was to evaluate Alex using an interprofessional team approach. Comprised of five professions, dental medicine, occupational therapy, physical therapy, osteopathic medicine, and social work, our team had a breadth of knowledge and were challenged to bring that knowledge together to create a treatment plan for Alex.

Goals and Collaboration

The main goal of this exercise was to treat Alex using interprofessional collaboration. In coming together as a team to treat Alex, each profession had specific questions in mind to accomplish this goal. Dental medicine planned to address periodontal disease and dental pain. Occupational therapy intended to assess and address barriers in Alex's life. Physical therapy and osteopathic medicine prepared to address patient's vertigo and neck pain. Social work intended to address anxiety and feelings of hopelessness.

Establishing how to do this as a team, we came to prioritize certain questions we would ask Alex. What did she want out of this healthcare experience and how could we help her accomplish that? What were her biggest concerns? Our team wanted to understand her expectations and what she would like us to accomplish together. We also determined that due to the nature of the profession of social work, that team member would be the point person who would be present at all simulations with Alex. This would allow for continuity of care and a sense of comfort with the patient.

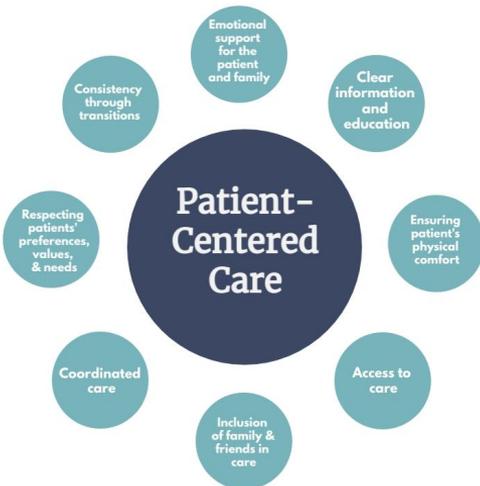
Our Work With Alex

•From conversations with Alex, our team learned that she had been negatively impacted by poor experiences with healthcare providers in the past, leading her to feel unsupported. When our own conversations with her mirrored a standard medical interview with closed-ended questions, she appeared frustrated. However, as we began to utilize more open-ended questions, Alex's engagement increased.

•Providing Alex with opportunities to share with the team:

- Gave her more control over the topics we discussed.
- Allowed her to raise concerns we had not addressed, including food insecurity and feeling that she was a burden to others.
- Helped us develop a patient-centered plan and identify resources tailored to Alex's needs.

•Although Alex seemed to respond more positively to collaborative, patient-centered interaction, our team had difficulty reconciling the problem-centric and patient-centric perspectives held by some members of the group. Addressing this issue as a unified team may have improved Alex's care outcomes.



Interprofessional Learning and Growth

The IPTI experience required our interprofessional team to communicate and collaborate in order to provide comprehensive care to Alex. This process was both challenging and enlightening. Most of us had not engaged in such intense interprofessional work.

Difficulty arose when our opinions and approaches to patient care differed. This required each member to advocate for what they believed to be Alex's primary concerns and healthcare issues. As a team, we needed to understand each others' perspectives and goals before providing cohesive care.

After the last simulation, our team was given the opportunity to discuss the experience with Rachel, the actor who portrayed Alex. She described how it felt to be bombarded with questions, suggesting that in the future, we rely less on pre-planned checklists. She also emphasized the importance of connecting with our client and thoroughly exploring their concerns. Rachel also encouraged us to utilize active listening, validation, and to be more cognizant of our clients' body language. These valuable suggestions reflect a desire to be understood and supported, elements commonly seen in patient-centered care.

Conclusion

After completing our sessions with Alex, we learned that using a client-centered approach is the best tactic for working with future individuals. This approach is based on the client's needs and wants, and puts them front and center when developing a plan of care. It allows the individual to feel safe and secure, as well as trust the medical team they're working with. We learned that if we had approached Alex with a more understanding and empathetic stand-point, she would have felt more at ease during the session.

Additionally, we learned the importance of working as an inter-disciplinary team when developing a plan of care for an individual. The goal of this activity was to learn from each other and understand the mindset each discipline, as well as collaborate our ideas and viewpoints in the hopes of helping Alex achieve her goals for treatment.

Overall, this was an enriching and eye-opening experience that will carryover into our futures as real-life practitioners.

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