Interprofessional Communication Education-
Learning to Speak the Same Language to Improve Patient Safety

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Communication failures have been identified as a major factor in preventable medical errors. According to the 2016 CRISCO Strategies Comparative Benchmarking Report, poor communication costs 200 lives and $1.7 billion annually to the US Healthcare System. Interprofessional education (IPE) is recognized as a necessary step to prepare a collaborative practice-ready health workforce and improve health outcomes by the World Health Organization. The Patient Safety Simulation Lab in collaboration with Clinical Learning Educators developed an innovative IPE workshop that provides education on effective communication for novice nurses, physicians in training and other healthcare profession’s students.

Methods

Lead by patient safety simulation instructors, the session begins with a didactic presentation on effective team characteristics and standards of effective communication. Crisis Resource Management principles are introduced as a framework for effective communication in an acute care environment.

Instructional videos and case scenarios discussion are used to familiarize participants with Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety (TeamSTEPPS). SBAR, CUS and DESC are discussed as effective communication tools and strategies.

To demonstrate the application of the principles, tools and strategies learned, participants are assigned to multidisciplinary teams. Low fidelity simulation gives the opportunity for these teams to role play and debrief select patient care scenarios.

Results

End of workshop evaluation and 3-month post workshop survey are used to assess perceived impact on interprofessional teamwork experienced as a result of their participation in the workshop and evaluate the incorporation of tools and strategies into daily practice.

Participants stated that they enjoyed the opportunity to learn in a collaborative environment with professionals from other healthcare disciplines. Participants report they have effectively used the tools and strategies learned at the workshops. Students report a perceived positive impact on interprofessional teamwork, communication, and patient outcomes.

Discussion

IPE communication workshops started in 2016 and are offered twice a year. Diversity of healthcare profession’s students participating in the workshops continues to expand. IPE communication workshops have positively impacted over 220 novice nurses, 24 medical residents, 6 Advance Practice Nurse Practitioners, and 13 students in the following disciplines: Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist, Physician Assistant, Respiratory Therapist, and Physical Therapy Assistant.

Practice Implications

IPE communication workshops should continue to expand to more healthcare profession’s students and offered to the health workforce. IPE is a recommended strategy for ongoing development of exceptional multidisciplinary teams and to sustain a culture of effective communication and patient safety.

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