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FEATURE : EVENT REPORT

Health Fusion Team Challenge – working together in a multi-disciplinary team

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Mariam is a first year House Officer working at Christchurch Hospital. She was the 2012 Editor-in-Chief of the New Zealand Medical Student Journal. In her spare time, she can be found sleeping or playing Words With Friends.

Mrs W is a 58 year old woman who was diagnosed with a high grade glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) two years ago. She and her husband have been referred from the GP as she now presents with increasing confusion, unsteadiness on her feet, and her husband is struggling to cope with her care. He is particularly worried as Mrs W has limited insight into the seriousness of her condition.

You are a community-based specialist team that provides comprehensive health services to patients with chronic deteriorating conditions. Your task as a team is to make a multi-disciplinary plan for the management of Mrs W.

This is a summary of the brief a group of us received at the start of August last year. We were participating in a competition called the Health Fusion Team Challenge, and had four weeks to develop a plan to present for judgement at a competition in Brisbane.

The Health Fusion Team Challenge is an extracurricular activity designed for final year health professional students. Teams consisting of four to six students from various health professions work together to develop a management plan for a patient scenario. The participants are studying in various courses including medicine, nursing, social work, physiotherapy, speech language therapy, pharmacy, occupational therapy and dietetics. They are given a case of a patient with a chronic health problem and must work together to produce a management plan that addresses fairly complex health issues. The Challenge culminates with a public event, where the teams of students present their plans to a panel of judges and face additional on-the-spot questions. The aim of the Challenge is for each student to improve their communication, teamwork and clinical skills, while working with students from other disciplines.

Competitions of this type were first held at the University of British Columbia in Canada over 25 years ago, and an Australian version has been running since 2007 at the University of Queensland. In 2012, for the first time, the Australian Health Fusion Team Challenge (Oz HFTC) invited teams from New Zealand to compete in the competition. Two Kiwi teams entered the competition: a group of students training at Canterbury District Health Board (which I was a part of) and another team from Auckland University of Technology.

Our team consisted of students from medicine, nursing, social work, physiotherapy and speech language therapy, as well as a mentor to guide us along the way. We were given the above case of Mrs W, with information about her medical history, medications, home and financial situation, information about her activities of daily living and social life. As a team, we outlined some short, medium and longer term goals for the patient and her family. We had a strong focus on making our plan holistic and chose to utilise the Whare Tapa Wha model to create a plan addressing all aspects of the patient's wellbeing.

After a series of meetings and email discussions, we flew to Brisbane to compete in the Oz HFTC. For the New Zealand teams it was our first exposure to the challenge, whereas some of the Australian universities have been competing in the event for many years now. It was interesting to see how the various teams tackled the issue and it was clear that some teams had had serious coaching for the event. While our team received praise for a holistic plan that discussed the palliative nature of the case, we did not progress through to the final round. However, we were happy with our overall performance, had a great time, and learnt a lot from the entire competition.

The aspect of this event that I enjoyed the most was that it offered the chance to work within a multi-disciplinary team. I enjoyed interacting with the other students and discussing what they do in their professions. The overall process gave me a better appreciation for how all our contributions can work together to provide optimal health outcomes for patients. The Challenge also made me think more about my role as a doctor within the multi-disciplinary team. We are the principal carer of the patient and in this role we need to provide leadership to the team of professionals we are working with. On reflection, I feel that my participation in this exercise has helped me be confident and proactive about engaging with other health professions in my new role as a House Officer.

The Health Fusion Team Challenge is an excellent way to meet people



Figure 1 (above): The Canterbury District Health Board team pose for a photo after their presentation in Brisbane.

outside of the medical school bubble, develop some vital skills that will be useful in your future career; learn more about how the multi-disciplinary team works, and have some fun along the way. The Challenge has been rebranded as the Trans Tasman Health Fusion Team Challenge and will take place again in late August 2013. I would love to see teams from each of New Zealand's four main centres competing. If you are interested in starting something at your school, then please get in touch with me at maria.parwaiz@gmail.com. You can also find out more about the Health Fusion Team Challenge here: <http://www.healthfusionteamchallenge.com/>

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FEATURE : OPINION PIECE

We're all in this together: a personal view on interprofessional learning

Yassar Alamri

Interprofessional learning (IPL) can be defined as the experience gained from the interaction of members or students of two or more health professions, which can arise from interprofessional education or as a result of working at the same place.¹ Every year, thousands of students join various professional health courses. Each student comes with their own

attitude on their chosen course, and their preconceived views on other professional health sectors.²⁻⁴ Hence, there has been an increasing demand to include an element of interprofessional learning in the education systems of many health science organisations worldwide.