

Editorial:

Collaboration in health professional education

Collaboration is defined by the Macquarie Dictionary (2021) as the “united effort put into a project ... cooperation” (Definition 1). In healthcare, collaboration is often associated with interprofessional, or collaborative, practice. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) (2010), this occurs “when multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds provide comprehensive services by working with patients, their families, carers and communities to deliver the highest quality of care” (p. 7). Successful interprofessional teams are more effective, efficient and innovative, and better at managing risk, because they work out differences in ideas and beliefs and compromise in a timely manner (Morley & Cashell, 2017). This can lead to stronger health systems and better health outcomes (WHO, 2010).

In an effort to improve collaborative practice, interprofessional learning has become a focus for many health professional educators and researchers. It occurs “when two or more professions learn about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes” (WHO, 2010, p. 7). The Australian Medical Council (2012) accreditation standards, which are applied by the Medical Council of New Zealand, cite the WHO guidelines for interprofessional learning, thus mandating it in undergraduate medical education across both countries. Yet, in their analysis of articles about collaboration within medicine and medical education, Paradis et al. (2017) highlight that physicians are considered the leaders of interprofessional teams involving staff and students from “other” health professions, thus continuing traditional hierarchies in health that can prove detrimental to collaboration. Interprofessional learning may help to improve collaborative practice, but more is needed to overcome the many contextual barriers in health (Paradis et al., 2017).

Of course, health professional education involves many different types of collaborative practice. Health professional educators from one profession may work with staff of the same profession who have different areas of specialisation, or with staff of different professions (Paradis et al., 2017). More broadly, health professional educators may expand their teaching and research through collaborating with artists, designers, engineers, librarians and other professionals. Through collaboration and discussion with colleagues, educators can solve problems in their teaching and, by so doing, develop their teaching beliefs and practices (Beijaard & De Vries, 1997). Collaborative research practice, such as action research, can also facilitate professional development (Harvey et al., 2020).

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Additionally, health professional educators can learn through collaboration with students as partners (Galgut et al., 2017).

Articles in this issue of *Focus on Health Professional Education* draw on collaboration in some form. Curren, Reid, Coombs, Pike, Farrell, McPherson, O’Dea, Curtis and Trahey report that a Collaborator OSCE (COSCE) is useful for encouraging the development of trainees’ collaboration skills and formatively assessing them. Similarly, in their scoping review of interprofessional simulation interventions in medical education, Langton, Dounas, Moore, Bacchi and Thomas found that interprofessional attitudes and collaboration can be improved when they are measured outcomes. The mentorship and support needs of graduate physiotherapists in rural and remote settings are explored by Martin, Mandrusiak, Lu and Forbes. Reporting on their research in podiatry education, Russell, Murley, Oates, Li and Raspovic highlight that ATAR scores moderately predict student marks in biosciences subjects but not in subjects involving group work or in podiatry-specific subjects, which require collaboration, communication and interpersonal skills. In their reflection on rapid changes to preclinical teaching due to COVID-19, Cobbold and Wright highlight the benefits of teacher collaboration and student feedback for teaching and curricular development. And finally, as part of our *Focus on Methodology* series, Tai, Noble and Fischer provide an overview of observational research methods through a range of qualitative research approaches. The authors include detailed practical considerations, case studies of their own research and recommended readings and resources.

Finally, we are pleased to announce a special theme for 2022–2023: “Focus on Interprofessional Learning (IPL)”. We call for original research articles focusing on interprofessional learning, which we will publish in each issue from mid-2022 through to early-2023 alongside our regular articles and invited “Focus on Methodology” articles. Our special guest editor for this special theme is Associate Professor Jodie Copley, *FoHPE* deputy editor. More details about the call for papers for the IPL special theme are available on the *FoHPE* website.

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Editor

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