

Interprofessional Health Care Education on Substance Use Disorders: Understanding Student Attitudes Toward & Perceptions of Practice

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PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to investigate how interprofessional education impacts a clinician's confidence in treating individuals with substance use disorders (SUDs). The research questions were What are the attitudes and perceptions of pharmacy, physician assistant, and occupational therapy students around working with individuals with SUDs? and Does a stigma exist within the student population of three healthcare professions around SUDs?. A literature review provides evidence to a variety of interprofessional education (IPE) programs in SUDs training. The IPE often occurs among health science programs; however, no research was found regarding interprofessional education of pharmacy, physician assistant (PA), and occupational therapy professions exclusively. Common elements of these programs include case studies and role-playing, small groups, and surveys to analyze growth. Education of future clinicians around SUDs helps to prepare them to confidently treat clients with these disorders both collaboratively and in their respective professional careers. The ultimate goal of occupational therapy practice is to treat patients holistically; however, it is impossible to accomplish this goal without knowledge and consideration of SUDs and their impact on occupation.

DESIGN: The study utilized a quasi-experimental approach. Subjects were purposively sampled as 4th year occupational therapy students, 1st and 2nd year pharmacy students, and 4th year PA students. These students were all part of the required curriculum from each of the professional programs. Recruitment and enrollment was conducted without regard for race or ethnic background. These recruitment methods have maintained confidentiality of potential subject information and limit coercion.

METHOD: Quantitative data was collected through pretest-posttest administration of two assessments related to the outcomes of the program. The Student Perceptions of Interprofessional Clinical Education-Revised 2 [SPICE-R2] Questionnaire asks participants about their attitudes toward interprofessional health care teams and the team approach to patient care. The Brief Substance Abuse Attitudes Survey [SAAS] evaluates practitioners perspectives on substance abuse, and was used to gather information about the students change in attitude post program participation. The PIs and research assistants entered the data into Microsoft Excel files and ran statistical tests and frequency distributions.

RESULTS: Overall quantitative analysis of the survey responses revealed statistically significant changes in all SPICE-R2 factors related to participants' values and understanding of interprofessional work following the programming. While the significance of change around attitudes and perceptions around SUDs (SAAS) was less universal, there was noted significance with non-stereotyping, treatment intervention, and treatment optimism, suggesting promising outcomes of this program to incorporate meaningful change when treating this vulnerable population. These results demonstrate that an interprofessional education program dedicated to informing healthcare students about SUDs has a significant impact on these students' attitudes and perceptions towards individuals with SUDs.

CONCLUSION: Understanding the impact of interdisciplinary SUDs programming is vital for increasing the understanding, attitudes, and behaviors of future occupational therapy practitioners to address the needs of this patient population. In addition, collaboration and accessibility to de-stigmatized care both meet AOTA's Vision 2025. By understanding OT students' experiences in this programming, faculty can learn to better prepare future practitioners to be a part of the solution in this public health crisis.

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