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The role of interprofessional education and teamwork in a student-led health equity fair

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Keywords

Health Equity; Qualitative Research; Health Fairs; Interprofessional Education

Abstract

The Health Care Equity Fair (HCEF) began in 2009 as a health screening fair organized by OHSU students across interprofessional programs, including medical, dental, physician assistant, nursing, and pharmacy, to address the challenges faced by Oregonians who do not have health insurance. As the number of unhoused individuals in Portland, Oregon continues to grow, HCEF provides a safety net for individuals seeking crucial medical care in the absence of larger and more permanent structural solutions. Low-cost or free community health fairs like HCEF allow individuals that face barriers to health services such as housing or insurance, to access preventative services and address unmet healthcare needs. HCEF serves as an opportunity for students to collaborate with learners from other programs, both in fair planning and in direct patient support, while promoting health equity within our community.

Previous studies have shown the benefits of interprofessional education (IPE) and interdisciplinary collaboration. A qualitative study found benefits of nursing-student-led health fairs and benefits of health fairs in general after analyzing focus groups of senior-level nursing students completing their clinical portion of a public health course (Matsuda, et al.). Further research analyzed twenty-seven focus groups made up of interprofessional healthcare students and professionals, finding benefits of IPE to include development of personal relationships, improved education, and improved patient care (Carney, et al.). Our study addresses the question of what student experiences emerge from planning and volunteering for a student-led health care equity fair regarding perspectives on role, motivation, career goal, and interprofessional education.

Methods

We collected quantitative and qualitative data through a post-fair survey shared with all the student volunteers. 58 students from across OHSU's medical, dental, physician assistant, nursing, and pharmacy schools served on interprofessional committees that helped plan the fair and 158 students volunteered on the day of the fair.

There were 123 responses to the survey, 77 of which were fully completed. In the survey, student volunteers answered questions about their role with HCEF, motivations behind choosing their role, and their professional goals. We performed a qualitative content analysis of the survey answers for further analysis of shared themes.

Initial Results/Impact/DEI

Interprofessional collaboration between students and professionals at OHSU and community partners help students to be better equipped to serve the needs of their community and further the fair's goal of health equity. Students reported through the qualitative survey that the chance to work with peers from other programs, specific interest in health equity and underserved communities, gaining volunteer experience, and curriculum requirements were motivations to volunteer. One student wrote in their survey response: "HCEF is one of the few events that people from OHSU's different schools can come together and utilize our strengths to provide healthcare for Portland's underserved." Future goals for HCEF include increasing the diversity and number of student volunteers from various programs to not only foster greater interprofessional education and collaboration, but also to expand services and reach an even larger number of participants.

References

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