



POLICY FORUM

Conquering Health Care Complexity as a Team: Evolution of Interprofessional Education in North Carolina

Introduction

Many years ago, as a first- and second-year medical student, I volunteered with the Student Health Action Committee—SHAC—in clinics in Durham and Chapel Hill. Staffed by students from both Duke and UNC, SHAC provided integrated primary care to the uninsured under the supervision of faculty preceptors.

Yes, you read that right. Over 50 years ago a student clinic was practicing integrated primary care, which today is a best practice not yet available to many insured patients. Our SHAC clinics were not simply interdisciplinary. Medical students, nursing students, pharmacy students, and social work students practiced together, with warm handoffs of information and expertise. We might say we practiced team-based care, had the term been coined.

After reading, editing, and enjoying the articles in this issue of the *North Carolina Medical Journal*, I realize that we students in the SHAC clinics were immersed in and encouraged to practice interprofessional education. We were speaking, sharing, and learning how and what our student colleagues were taught, how they were being trained in skills that differed from our own professional education, and how each of us brought a different perspective—and vocabulary—to our interactions and to the care of the people we served.

This issue of the journal invites you to meet a broad group of health professionals who are mindfully and systematically thinking about thinking. Our authors recognize that you can bring different professionals together in a carefully formed team to care for the increasingly complex patients and communities we serve. But if we don't recognize the ways in which we think and acquire a vocabulary distinctly from one another—and learn to appreciate, respect, and celebrate those differences—we are not a team at all. Our authors are creating and describing intentional experiences between different disciplines to improve how we listen and hear and collaborate with one another, yielding to the wisdom of colleagues who bring more to the encounter than we might have imagined.

Interprofessional education is alive and well in many of our academic and community institutions, focusing on the relationships that grow beyond health care to improve health. NCMJ

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