

Developing and Sustaining Strong Clinical Partnerships for IPE

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Abstract

Much has been made of the importance of developing strong academic-clinical partnerships to anchor IPE. The so-called NEXUS or integration of the expertise of both partners is viewed as central to student learning of collaboration competence. Yet, there is very little in the IPE literature describing how to develop lasting and effective relationships between academic faculty and clinical practice sites. The purpose of this presentation is to describe the process we used to establish academic-clinical partnerships for IPE and important lessons.

We are using a qualitative descriptive method to explore the process for developing effective relationships with selected clinical partners for a funded grant on IPE in primary care. Criteria for selecting potential partners are 1) current clinical placements for students of two or more different professions; 2) commitment of the practice site to interprofessional practice; and 3) interest in preparing students for collaborative practice models. We have collected narrative data on each meeting and encounter with practice partners and conducted interviews with administrators and preceptors at the sites. Narrative data and interviews are systematically coded and analyzed to identify key process steps in relationship development and important features that support or impede the process.

The process of developing clinical partnerships consists of several phases, not simply introduction and implementation. Potential clinical partners have numerous competing interests and look for specific indicators of sincere commitment for working with them and achieving meaningful outcomes. Their incentives are diverse and must be addressed to sustain relationships. We identified a set of strategies to facilitate the process that we will share in the presentation.

Partnerships with clinical sites and establishing an academic-clinical nexus is now considered integral to effective IPE. The work of Nexus development is complex and multi-faceted. The results of our experience lays important foundation for understanding this important process.

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