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FEATURE

PT students are working with, and benefitting from, students and professionals from various fields both in the classroom and in their clinical internships.

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DPT student Josh D'Angelo and his colleagues were working with a patient when suddenly the patient collapsed. They called 911, and 3 minutes later, Emergency Management Services (EMS) workers were on site. They described to EMS what occurred, and they helped EMS move the patient safely onto a stretcher en route to the ambulance.

What happened, though, wasn't an actual emergency. In fact, it was an exercise, one of many simulations, in a DPT geriatrics class taught by Elizabeth Ruckert, PT, DPT, NCS, GCS, assistant professor of physical therapy and health sciences at The George Washington University of Medicine and Health Sciences. A module in the course deals with handling emergency situations. Within the class, the students participate in a number of exercises in which a patient who is older experiences a simulated medical emergency. The PT students then interact directly with EMS students to determine how to help the patient.



For at least 3 years, Ruckert explains, PT department staff has worked directly with colleagues in the emergency management services department so that PT and EMS students will have these opportunities for collaborative interprofessional experiences. "We felt that it was really important for PTs to not only know and tell us what they would do, but also actually be able to show us the skills they would use if a patient experienced an emergency," explains Ruckert. Through this interprofessional role playing, PT students "actually practice the steps that they've learned so that it becomes natural."

Ruckert says that about 50% of the students encounter emergency situations when on their clinical rotations. So the education is practical, helping them to be prepared before experiencing a real emergency.

"This experience allowed us the opportunity to try to communicate with other health professionals students-and represent ourselves in a professional manner-while at the same time providing the EMS students a similar experience," says D'Angelo, who now has received his DPT. "In the simulations, we developed strong communication skills and a comfort level in speaking with other professionals."

Interprofessional education (IPE)-working with others in various professions for the good of the patient-occurs when learners from 2 or more professions learn about, from, or with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes.?

IPE isn't new. In fact, Sean Gallivan, PT, MS, NCS, C/NDT, academic coordinator of clinical education for the DPT program



Education and Collaborative Practice Glossary. Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaborative.
<http://cihc.wikispaces.com/Interprofessional+Glossary++Online+Version>. Accessed April 9, 2012.

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