I. Introduction

This white paper discusses establishment of a center for interprofessional education and practice aimed at providing preparation for students engaged in health professions studies in the Yakima Valley. Establishment of a center of excellence focused on interprofessional education is driven first and foremost by a goal of improving health outcomes for people of this Valley. The current healthcare delivery process in Yakima Valley is challenged by complexity, including a declining pool of healthcare professionals, and provision of care for a demanding population, including diversity within the population, and an increasingly vulnerable population (including elderly, homeless, and those with chronic illness). Leaders have been commissioned with examination of the strategies employed in educational preparation of future healthcare professionals, and how this may be influenced to enhance patient health outcomes. A collaborative interprofessional team approach has been identified as a positive influence on healthcare delivery, and interprofessional education has been linked to enhanced outcomes and improvement in the areas of safety and cost (Reeves, Perrier, Goldman, Freeth, & Zwarenstein, 2013).

II. Background

Teamwork is not an outcome of simply placing a group of individuals together in one place; it is, however, a response to commitment, collaboration, and effective communication with a common goal (King et al., 2008). Health professions education/training has traditionally occurred independently in silos. This approach has limited the ability to offer a synergistic approach, which is seen in intercollaborative agency. Interprofessional education occurs when students from two or more professions learn about, from, and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes (WHO, 2010). Engagement in developing future healthcare providers, therefore, will take a change in mindset from one of viewing the team as multiprofessional, to a team that is interprofessional, and with a focus on collaborative approaches embracing a goal of improved patient outcomes.

To reach a goal of restoring, maintaining and improving health and optimizing health outcomes, it is imperative that a combining of resources is evident. Development of early interprofessional collaborative experiences for healthcare professional students before they begin practice, will allow an opportunity to learn with and from, and about each other, and provide a venue to share skills and knowledge between disciplines. Common themes have been identified in successful interprofessional curricula models, and these include a commitment from colleges and universities, curricular mapping, adequate physical space, technology, and strong community relationships. Additionally, best practice recommendations for successful development of an interprofessional collaborative education program include administration support, programmatic infrastructure, committed faculty, and student engagement (Bridges et al., 2011).
III. Current State of Affairs

Yakima Valley is home to approximately 250,000 people (US Census Bureau, 2014). The Valley is culturally and ethnically diverse with a distribution of 46% white, 47% Hispanic, 6% American Indian, 1.5% Asian and 1.5% Black or African American (US Census Bureau, 2014). Approximately 23% of the people residing in Yakima Valley live below the poverty line, and a 6.9% unemployment rate was recorded in August 2014 (Employment Security, 2014). The high school dropout rate is 23.5% (17.8% for Washington state), and 30% of the population has no High School diploma. In 2014, 563 people were counted as homeless. Twenty five percent of the population has no health insurance (US Census Bureau, 2014). The complexity of healthcare delivery is compounded by the challenges faced by Yakima Valley, including those noted as well as the limited healthcare provider availability which is 1.5 per 1000 people (compared to 2.4 for Washington state) (US Census Bureau, 2014). A focus on maximizing resources is requisite, and one strategy may be a focus on developing training opportunities for future healthcare professionals aimed at interprofessional collaborative teams.

IV. Goal

Our vision is that healthcare practitioners, trained in the Yakima Valley, will practice collaboratively to achieve the triple aim of better care for individuals, lower per capita costs, and better overall health for the community (IHI, 2014). This vision will be realized through improved quality of inter-professional health education and improved collaborative practice and team based care, which will result in improved health outcomes.

V. Solution

To achieve our goals we must design and implement a structured program for inter-professional education and practice (IPE&P) in the Yakima Valley. A steering committee consisting of representatives from the affiliated teaching programs will provide oversight and guidance for the program. The affiliated programs include but are not limited to, Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences (Osteopathic Medicine), Heritage University (Nursing, Physician Assistants), Washington State University (Nursing, Pharmacy), and Yakima Valley Community College (health sciences). One of the first challenges for the committee will be to inform and engage key community stakeholders in the need to further develop inter-professional education and training opportunities in the valley. These stakeholders will be invited to participate in an advisory committee to inform the collaborative on community needs and local healthcare priorities that can be addressed through improved IPE&P. It is anticipated that this committee will have representation from hospitals, medical practices, community organizations providing healthcare services, students, and patients.

Because of the complexity of the work and our aggressive timeline, it will be critical to recruit and hire an IPE Director to lead and coordinate these efforts beginning in early 2015. The timeline goal is to introduce the IPE concepts, curricular options, and training and assessment
processes to incoming students in the fall of 2015. The program director will have extensive project management experience as well as excellent communication and facilitation skills.

One of the vital initial tasks for the collaborative will be to perform an assessment of currently available interprofessional training experiences offered in the valley by our affiliated programs. These activities will be characterized according to whether they provide introductory, intermediate or advanced experiences and will be mapped according to appropriate placement in the professional curriculum of the participating disciplines. This characterization and mapping will occur utilizing validated tools and rubrics. Identified gaps in current training programs will be targets for future curricular development. The goal for curricular enhancement is to develop, coordinate, and implement a core interprofessional education curriculum to exceed accreditation standards for member institutions and to include the core competencies described by the 2011 Interprofessional education collaborative expert panel (IPEC, 2011). These competencies fall into four categories; values and ethics for interprofessional practice, roles and responsibilities, interprofessional communication, and teams and teamwork. Faculty and practitioner training in facilitating IPE experiences will be needed as well as methods to ensure engagement of these individuals and appropriate recognition for their efforts related to promotion and tenure.

In order to assure that the work of the IPE collaborative is achieving its goals and meeting its purpose, a plan for assessment will be developed and implemented. This plan will include assessments of educational outcomes, student and faculty satisfaction, and ultimately impacts of improved interprofessional practice on local community health outcomes. This is an area of tremendous research potential and it is anticipated that the collaborative will actively seek extramural funding to support a portion of the work.

VI. Conclusion

Health professions education has traditionally been conducted in discipline specific silos which discourages adequate preparation of future practitioners for team based care and collaboration. Interprofessional education occurs when health professions students learn about, with, and from one another. A structured program to deliver cutting edge and outcomes based interprofessional education in the Yakima Valley will ensure that health care providers will be able to function as effective and valued members of collaborative teams that provide exceptional care to patients in the Yakima Valley to improve quality of care, reduce healthcare costs, and improve the overall health of our community.
VII. Resource Links

Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC)

https://ipecollaborative.org/

The National Center for Interprofessional Practice and Education


TeamSTEPPS

http://teamstepps.ahrq.gov/

VIII. References


Prepared by:

Sandy Carollo, PhD, MSN, FNP-BC
Angela Stewart, BSPharm, PharmD, BCPS