

Effectiveness of interprofessional education in undergraduate medicine: a systematic review

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Background:

The use of interprofessional education (IPE) in undergraduate medical education has always been promoted by institutions around the world to prepare medical students to work in a multidisciplinary environment. However, there was no general agreement in how to effectively conduct IPE for medical students. Therefore, this systematic review was carried out to study the current approaches of IPE used in undergraduate medical education to inform medical school educators of the most up-to-date and effective ways to conduct IPE.

Methods:

Searches were performed in Medline, Embase and CINAHL for publications that studied the use of IPE in undergraduate medical students. Studies were included if the study looked at IPE between medical students and other health discipline students in pre-licensure training, the study evaluated the quantitative and/or qualitative outcomes of the IPE, the study design was an observational or quasi-experimental and the publication was peer-reviewed, in English and published between 2014-2024.

Results:

A total of **16 studies** were included. The approaches of IPE were subdivided into two areas, which are the professions involved and the delivery methods used, for evaluation of their effectiveness.

- The **lower the number of professions involved** in the IPE with medical students, the **more effective** it was in improving the readiness of medical students to learn with students from other professions and offering **better learning experiences** for medical students.
- **Nursing students** was the **most common** type of profession to be involved in IPE with medical students and they **rated IPE higher** than that of medical students.
- **Face-to-face IPE** could lead to **more significant improvement in teamwork and collaboration** in participants than online IPE.
- **More growth in person-centred care** was noted from face-to-face IPE compared to online IPE.

Some comments from medical students after IPE involving 5 to 7 professions

Medical students had to leave halfway, it would have been better to just allocate that amount of time for all students rather than others having to stay back.

(Van Diggele, Roberts and Haq, 2021)

Making sure that the case is relevant to all parties involved

It would have been helpful to have the necessary personnel based on the case.

Conclusions:

It has been confirmed that IPE has beneficial effects in undergraduate medical students. The optimal approach to conduct IPE tailored for undergraduate medical students is to implement it with just one other profession at a time starting with nursing students in a face-to-face format. Separate IPE sessions can then be arranged with other types of profession to prepare medical students to work in a multidisciplinary team and to promote the use of IPE in other professions. Future research should focus on comparing the effectiveness of online IPE and face-to-face IPE using standardised evaluation tools and stronger designs.