

# Cultivating an Empathic Understanding of Aging:

An Interprofessional Approach to Enhanced Provider-Patient Relationships at the cornerstone of Person-Centered Care

Margaret Brommelsiek, PhD  
School of Nursing & Health Studies

Barbara Glesner-Fines, JD  
School of Law



## 4 Goals:

1. Community of Practice
2. Provider-Patient Relationships
3. Sensitizing Practitioners
4. Empathy and Collaboration



- Establish a community of practice among health professions and law students to allow for the acquisition of new knowledge through team interaction toward excellence in patient care.
- Improve provider-patient relationships with older adults by developing health professions and law students' abilities to capture an individual's story about aging and the illness experience.
- Improve acceptance of patients of all ages by sensitizing practitioners to age-based stereotyping that interferes with provider-patient engagement.
- Increase empathic understanding and collaboration among health professions and law students to foster their ability and willingness to participate in public service as advocates for older adults.

## Student Outcomes:

Create meaningful relationships among health professions and law students toward improved geriatric care and through an enhanced appreciation of the lived experience of aging.



- Analyze the ways in which older adults are treated in contemporary society.
- Apply intervention strategies for helping change perceptions regarding aging.
- Demonstrate the importance of the IPE competencies in regard to serving an aging population.
- Demonstrate an understanding of empathy through respectful language in difficult situations.
- Model empathic advocacy in clinical practice through developing more thoughtful person-centered care plans.

## 5 Professional Schools:



- Interprofessional graduate-level students participated from the Schools of Nursing, Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry, and Law.
- Teaching Faculty was also interprofessional with representation from Nursing, Medicine, and Law.
- The first student cohort was 20 students: (5 Law; 5 Pharmacy; 5 Dentistry; 3 Medicine; and 2 Nursing) who met in January 2017.
- The second cohort was 15 students: (4 Law; 5 Pharmacy; 3 Dentistry; and 3 Medicine) who met in May, 2017.

## Course Content:

A humanities-informed IPE immersion course on older adult health and legal care for graduate health professions and law students with experiential practicum at two urban senior centers in Kansas City, Missouri.



mindfulness/mindful practice

experience of aging

social determinants of health

interpersonal communication

active listening techniques

interviewing techniques

ethics of health and law

active listening

role of empathy

stereotypes/countertypes

teamwork

patient advocacy

value of narrative

biographical mapping

personal self-care plans

reflective practice

## Hypothesis:

Active listening and engagement can prepare interprofessional student teams to participate in public service as advocates for the aged.



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We hypothesize that following education and practicum experience, student attitudes toward interprofessional teamwork, empathy toward older adults, and knowledge of health and legal issues facing older adults, students' emotional intelligence and willingness to advocate and serve older adult patients will increase and/or become more positive.

## Quantitative Data:

Students reported increases in ability to put themselves into the roles and feelings of fictional characters, valuing working as a healthcare team, moving toward a shared leadership model, and increased skills for working together as a team.



- Student cohorts were surveyed pre and post immersion training and practicum experience.
- Instruments:
  - Demographic questions
  - The *Attitudes Toward Health Care Teams Scale*
  - The *Teams Scale*
  - The *Interpersonal Reactivity Index*
  - The *Emotional Intelligence Scale*
  - The *Geriatrics Attitude Scale*

## Qualitative Data:

Qualitative data was collected via focus groups using semi-structured interviews post immersion and practicum. Highlights include meeting older adults and hearing their stories; working with the other health professions; and participating in the immersion course and practicum.



- **IPE/IPC Experiences:** More content on the connection between healthcare and law; more real-world examples of interprofessional teamwork.
- **Surprises about Roles:** Breadth of dentistry and pharmacy practices; how law students have had difficult conversations.
- **Lessons Learned about Older Adults:** Never judge a book by its cover, resiliency, and candor; not needing so many questions, just a few and then listen; stereotyping exercise was helpful to understand stigma of older adults.
- **Interpersonal Communication and Mindfulness:** Learning to respond empathically and use non-verbal skills.
- **Deciding on a Leader:** Not feel crowded by the group; let the group decide who the leader should be; volunteering and making this organic.
- **Empathy:** Understanding the complexity of caring for older adults; empathy for all people increased because of the course.

## Lessons Learned:

Changing the nature of the conversation is critical for improving provider-patient relationships and increasing empathic care.



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- Early in the first immersion training, it became apparent that health and law professions students are not trained to engage with patients/clients through conversation, but to only ask the most basic questions in order to identify an issue and fix it.
- The project faculty re-adjusted the course content to allow for more discussions among the groups using case studies and demonstrated through mock interviews.
- The result was more confidence among the students in the second cohort when the IPC teams conducted their interviews with the older adults.

Questions:



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