Learning from each other: an inter-profession education (IPE) pilot on respiratory health for pharmacy and medical students

Authors: William Ford, Louise Hughes. Welsh School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Cardiff University.

Background: Inter-professional education (IPE) can increase health students’ understanding of each other’s roles, enhance interpersonal skills and aid a more holistic approach to working. We therefore designed and piloted an IPE session for pharmacy and medical students involving peer-led training of clinical skills, focussing on respiratory health. Selection of the participating cohorts was based on previous training in complementary clinical skills (for pharmacy students, effective inhaler; for medical students, chest examination). The IPE exercise was designed to educate both sets of students about spirometry and encourage them to use their respective skills and knowledge to teach each other and jointly solve patient cases.

Description: All undergraduate year 2 pharmacy (n=112) and year 1 medical (n=116) students took part in a compulsory session (repeated four times over two days). Each session began with an introductory lecture on concepts and principles of spirometry. Following this, small (n=2-3) mixed subsets were taught to operate a Vitalograph™ alpha spirometer to obtain data such as forced exhaled volume in 1 second (FEV1) and forced vital capacity (FVC). In parallel, pharmacy students used their counselling skills to teach the medical students how to use different placebo inhaler devices in conjunction with the Vitalograph™ AIM device, providing corrective feedback where necessary; while medical students taught the principles of basic chest examination (e.g. breath sounds, asymmetry) to their pharmacy partners through demonstration and feedback. The students also worked together to apply their knowledge to written patient-based respiratory cases.

Proposed evaluation: An evaluation form was provided to all undergraduate participants and comprised four questions: ‘What was the best feature of today’s teaching?’, ‘Would you change anything about the day?’, ‘What did you learn today?’ and ‘Any other comments?’. Resulting data will be analysed thematically. Feedback from the staff facilitators will also be sought using interviews to explore their views.