

LINK IN with IPE: The Need for Interprofessional Education

This will be an oral presentation

ABSTRACT: Within the past ten years, a link between overall health and oral health has emerged. Several studies conclude that individuals with cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and other systemic health conditions have greater difficulty managing their disease if they have advanced periodontitis. The general public and health care providers may be unaware of this connection. A twelve question convenience survey was distributed among 30 nursing students at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith to determine from the student's perspective, the need for Interprofessional Education (IPE) within the nursing curriculum. This study looked at the correlation of dental health literacy among future health care providers on this campus and their ability to screen patients with oral diseases and make appropriate referrals. Participant response (n=30) showed the majority (83%) indicated there was a need for oral health education within the curriculum. The Institute of Medicine recommends implementation of IPE to improve overall patient health. Increasing IPE provides the opportunity to utilize a team-based approach. Students using an IPE approach are more likely to become collaborative interprofessional team members. Greater respect and a positive attitude among professionals can improve overall patient outcomes. While improvements in interdisciplinary education are evolving to address this need, our survey results demonstrate room for improvement among dentistry and medicine. This collaboration is fundamentally important in order to prevent and control oral diseases and improve the status of overall health.