Wound Care Teams Are Stronger When They Embrace An Interprofessional Approach

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Defining Interprofessional Education/Care (IPE/IPC)

We often speak of working "interprofessionally" in health care and in wound care. However, this term is used by different people to mean similar but different things. Accordingly, it is important to define the difference between interprofessional and other related terms (e.g., collaborative, inter-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, coordinated). This brings precision to our language and helps to create a shared understanding that underlines practice.

Terms used across the literature include: inter-professional, collaborative, interdisciplinary, trans-disciplinary, multidisciplinary, multi-professional, coordinated and trans-professional.

Inter- denotes 'working together toward a goal'; i.e., interdisciplinary work, which is done jointly by professionals in different disciplines.

Multi- denotes 'working independently toward a common goal'; i.e., multidisciplinary work – parallel or sequential (but still independent) work from professionals in different disciplines.

To clarify the narrative, we need to think also about group or individual decision-making.[1]

Over the years, there have been a number of approaches aimed at getting the professions working together. These have been framed using the various terms above. But interprofessional care is different as it tries to be more precise in how practitioners engage with each other.

D'amour and Oandasan explain the difference

between interdisciplinary and interprofessional by intimating that the former term is concerned with knowledge and the latter with practice.[2] They note that 'interdisciplinary' approaches to teamwork recognize that complex fields of research draw on knowledge from many different disciplines. Equally, modern professionals are faced with professional challenges that require skills and knowledge from many different professions and through interprofessional efforts, are able to meet these challenges more effectively.

Retchin seems to apply interdisciplinary to professionals from different disciplines but of similar educational/professional backgrounds (e.g., medical doctors), whereas interprofessional applies to efforts that involve professionals of different educational backgrounds with varying types of certifications, including, for instance, health-care professionals such as massage therapists, physiotherapists, and chiropractors as well as medical doctors.[1]

Oandasan and Reeves apply a similar definition to these terms, noting a general movement toward using the latter term over the former.[3] They note that the profession of 'doctor' includes many different disciplines but excludes other health-care professionals, for instance, such as chiropractors or massage therapists and that by explicitly moving toward the language of interprofessionalism, it includes a wider range of professionals. Additionally, Oandasan and Reeves distinguish between the *inter-* and *multi-* prefixes for professional and disciplinary work, noting that the former connotes working together toward a goal and the latter working independently toward a common goal. This latter distinction is also made by Mitchell,[4] in which she cites earlier work by Nowotny and Rosenfeld, to differentiate between multidisciplinary work – parallel or sequential (but still independent) work from researchers in different disciplines – and interdisciplinary work, which is done jointly

Table 1. Core Contrasts among the Baseball, Football, and Basketball Models

	Baseball	Football	Basketball
Organizational strategy			
Distinctive competence	Adding value through star performers	Reducing costs and/or complexity through global coordination	Innovating by combining resources in novel ways
Strategic orientation	Divergence	Convergence	Divergence and convergence
Organizational structure			
Interdependence	Pooled	Sequential	Reciprocal
Coordinating mechanism	Design of free-standing roles/units	Hierarchical planning and administration	Mutual adjustment
Decision system	Decentralized	Centralized	Shared
Information system	Locally controlled	Globally controlled	Distributed
Reward system	Individualistic	Hierarchic	Mutualistic
Effects of physical layout	Independent action	Programmed interaction	Voluntary interaction

Source: Keidel.[6]

by researchers in different disciplines. Although Mitchell references researchers, the application to professionals in health care and other areas remains clear.

Sheehan et al. consider 'multidisciplinary' and 'interprofessional' teamwork as steps on a scale that culminates in 'trans-professional', noting that with each step comes a reduction of formalities and role separation between the various professionals involved.[5] They state that, "working in a 'multidisciplinary' team is based on recognizing professional expertise and dividing the labour accordingly, whereas working in an 'interprofessional' team requires greater sensitivity to social issues within the team and willingness to share roles to develop collaborative ways of working.

Based on these formulations of professional working styles, the advantage of interprofessional teamwork seems to be a closer integration between team members from less closely related professional backgrounds which provides greater opportunities for problem-solving and more streamlined communication between team members.

We need to move from *uni-professional*, past *multi-professional*, to *interprofessional* teams. Simply sharing clinical space is necessary but not sufficient for creating high-functioning interprofessional teams.

Team Work

Although we use the term 'teamwork' thinking we all mean the same thing, I am reminded that Keidel makes the distinction that sports teams use different strategies depending on the game being played.[6] This is summarized in Keidel's chart (see Table 1).

Keidel points out that we need to understand the game we are playing and choose strategies that match carefully.[6]

I am also reminded of the interview where the candidate was asked, "Are you a team player?'" And responded, "Yes sir, 'team captain'!". Understanding the need to play different roles in teams is important.

Retchin also points out that our care settings require different approaches. Interprofessionality is different in emergency or surgical settings when compared to long-term care where we have the ability to deliberate during decision-making. Two key charts from Retchin summarize this concept clearly (see Figure 1 and Table 2).[1]

Temporality, urgency and structural authority define our IPC environments.

Interprofessional care is important for several reasons.

Holistic Patient Care: In health care, patients often have complex needs that require expertise from multiple disciplines. Interprofessional care ensures that patients receive holistic and well-rounded care, addressing not only their medical conditions but also considering psychological, social and environmental factors.

Improved Patient Outcomes: Collaboration among health-care professionals can lead to better patient outcomes. When a team of experts works together, they can develop more effective treatment plans, reduce errors and enhance the overall quality of care. This can result in improved patient satisfaction and a higher likelihood of successful treatment.

Enhanced Communication: Interprofessional care promotes effective communication among health-care team members. This includes sharing information, discussing treatment options and coordinating care plans. Clear and open communication helps prevent misunderstandings,
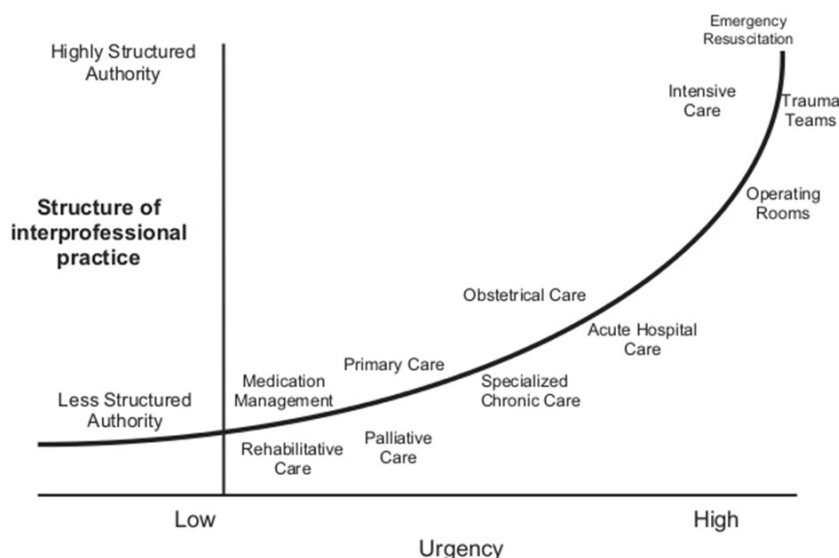
The sense of urgency defines how teams function:

Figure 1 Degree of structured authority of interprofessional care according to urgency.

Source: Academic Medicine, Vol. 83, No. 10 / October 2008

reduces the risk of errors and ensures that everyone involved in a patient's care is on the same page.

Efficient Resource Utilization: Collaboration allows for the efficient use of resources. Different professionals bring unique skills and perspectives to the table, and by working together, they can optimize the use of available resources, minimizing redundancies and maximizing the effectiveness of interventions.

Patient-Centered Care: Interprofessional care emphasizes a patient-centered approach, consid-

Table 2. Definitions, Constructs, Resource Intensity, and Examples of Interprofessional Care Domains

	Temporality	Urgency	Structured authority
Definitions	Time frame, episode of care	Intensity of care, degree of necessity for rapid decision making	Delineation of leadership in multidisciplinary team, conventionally associated with final authority in decision making
Constructs	Concurrent ⇆ sequential	Low ⇆ high	Less structured ⇆ highly structured
Resource intensity	*Concurrent*: Expensive because of standby capacity *Sequential*: Less expensive because it does not require real-time meetings or scheduling	Low urgency is likely to generate less resource intensity. However, low-urgency care (e.g., cancer care) can generate high-intensity resources over time	No relationship to resources, except that the need for structured authority is more likely to be concurrent and high intensity
Examples	*Concurrent*: Team meetings on rehabilitation unit for discharge planning *Sequential*: Coordination of care between acute and post-acute-care teams	*Low urgency*: Medication management strategies between pharmacists and primary care physicians for the anticoagulation management of patients with atrial fibrillation *High urgency*: Response to serious trauma event	*Less structured*: Group decision making during team conference

Source: Retchin[1]

ering the preferences and values of the patient in the decision-making process. When professionals from various disciplines collaborate, they can tailor treatment plans to align with the individual needs and preferences of the patient.

Adaptation To Complexity: Health care is becoming increasingly complex, with advancements in medical technology, evolving treatment modalities and a growing understanding of the interconnected nature of health issues. 'Interprofessional' care allows health-care teams to adapt to this complexity by drawing on the diverse expertise of different professionals.

Education And Professional Development: Interprofessional collaboration provides opportunities for ongoing learning and professional development. Health-care professionals can learn from each other, share their knowledge and skills, and stay informed about advancements in their respective fields.

Efficient Workflow: When health-care professionals collaborate, they can streamline workflows, reducing delays and improving the efficiency of health-care delivery. This is particularly important in fast-paced and high-stakes health-care environments.

In summary, interprofessional care is crucial for delivering comprehensive, patient-centered, and high-quality health-care. It brings together the expertise of different professionals, promotes

Interprofessional Resources

Three key resources are useful for those who wish to take interprofessional teams to a higher level and give them requisite focus.

Oandasan, I, Closson, T, et al. Interprofessional Care: A Blueprint for Action in Ontario, 2007: https://www.cor-healthontario.ca/01-ipc-blueprint-july-2007-en.pdf

WHO. Framework for action on interprofessional education & collaborative practice: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/framework-for-action-on-interprofessional-education-collaborative-practice

Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaborative. A National Interprofessional Competency Framework: https://phabc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/CIHC-National-Interprofessional-Competency-Framework.pdf

effective communication and contributes to improved patient outcomes. ◢

Creating An Effective Interprofessional Team

Creating an effective interprofessional team requires careful planning, communication and a commitment to collaboration. Here are key elements that contribute to the effectiveness of interprofessional teams:

Clear Goals and Objectives

• Clearly define the goals and objectives of the interprofessional team. Establish a shared understanding of the team's purpose, mission and expected outcomes. This

clarity helps align the efforts of team members toward common objectives.

Role Clarity

- Clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each team member. This includes understanding the unique contributions that individuals from different professions bring to the team. Clearly defined roles help prevent duplication of efforts and promote efficient collaboration.

Effective Communication

- Establish open and transparent communication channels within the team. Encourage regular meetings, discussions and the exchange of information. Effective communication helps prevent misunderstandings, promotes a shared understanding of patient needs and fosters a collaborative culture.
- Shared charts are important.
- Shared purpose-built space strengthens the team.

Mutual Respect

- Foster a culture of mutual respect among team members. Recognize and value the expertise of individuals from different professions. A respectful environment encourages open dialogue and the sharing of diverse perspectives, contributing to better decision-making and problem-solving.
- Leave the professional egos behind and treat other professionals as contributing equally and significantly to the team.

Shared Decision-Making

- Promote shared decision-making processes within the team. Encourage input from all team members, considering their unique perspectives and expertise. Shared decision-making not only leads to better-informed choices but also fosters a sense of ownership and commitment among team members.

Interprofessional Education

- Provide opportunities for interprofessional education and training. This can include workshops, seminars and simulations that allow team members to learn about each other's roles, responsibilities and perspectives. Increased understanding can lead to improved collaboration.

Effective Leadership

- Appoint or develop effective leaders who can guide the interprofessional team. Strong leadership is essential for setting a positive tone, facilitating collaboration and addressing challenges that may arise. Leaders should encourage a culture of collaboration and model effective communication.

Conflict Resolution Skills

- Equip team members with conflict resolution skills. In any collaborative setting, conflicts may arise due to differences in perspectives or approaches. Having strategies in place to address and resolve conflicts constructively is crucial for maintaining a positive team dynamic.

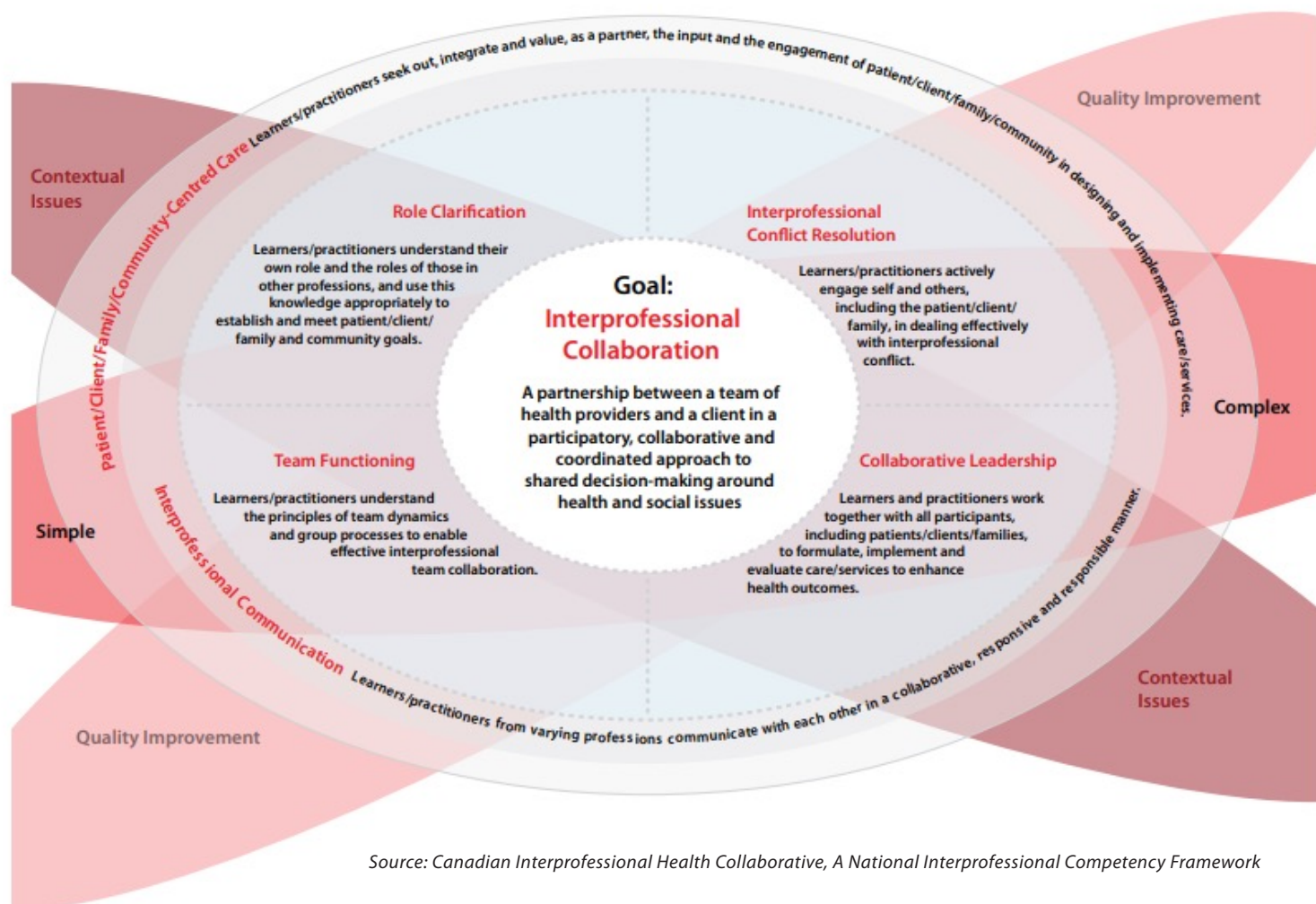**Continuous Evaluation and Improvement**

- Establish mechanisms for continuous evaluation of team performance and outcomes. Regularly assess the team's effectiveness, identify areas for improvement and implement changes as needed. This ongoing evaluation contributes to the team's ability to adapt to evolving challenges and improve over time.

Supportive Organizational Culture

- Create an organizational culture that supports and values interprofessional collaboration. This includes policies, incentives and resources that facilitate teamwork. When the broader organizational culture aligns with the goals of the interprofessional team, it enhances the team's effectiveness.

By incorporating these elements, organizations can create an environment where interprofessional teams can thrive, resulting in improved patient outcomes and a more comprehensive approach to health-care delivery.

This framework summarizes key elements for success in an interprofessional environment.

Source: Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaborative, A National Interprofessional Competency Framework

Figure 2. The National Competency Framework

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