Report of the Rutgers Interprofessional Education (IPE) Working Group

Nationally there has been a call for action to reform the education of health professionals to provide opportunities for various types of interprofessional interactions for students across all health professions. A Rutgers Interprofessional Education (IPE) Working Group was convened on 2/12/13 to review the current status of interprofessional education (IPE) on the New Brunswick Campuses. A small group of dedicated educators and leaders; Chair - Joe Schwenkler, MD, Medical Director of the Rutgers PA Program; RWJMS - Rob Zachow, PhD and Joyce Afran, MD; SHRP PA Program– Lori Palfreyman, PA-C; School of Pharmacy – Rolee Pathak Das, Pharm.D; and College of Nursing– Maureen Esteves, Ph.D., R.N, started to plan some interprofessional educational strategies to be implemented during the academic year.

The goals of the group were to develop objectives for IPE across the health professions schools and to explore opportunities with the current curricula of the various schools for integration of interprofessional education. Although there were some interprofessional experiences between some schools there was no program that encompassed all the professional schools and focused on opportunities for collaborative problem solving and developing relationships with peers. A Moodle website was developed to provide a central source of information related to the initiative. (http://moodle.rutgers.edu/course/view.php?id=4289).

One strategy was an Interprofessional Education (IPE) Case Conference sponsored by the Rutgers IPE Working Group and led by the Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences School of Health Related Professions Physician Assistant (PA) Program that was held at the Robert Wood Johnson Medical School campus in Piscataway on Monday, November 25th. Over 350 students and 50 facilitators participated in the event. The afternoon began in the Main Lecture Hall as the students interviewed a mock patient suffering from an acute Cerebrovascular Accident (CVA) and his distraught spouse. The Rutgers students from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, School of Health Related Professions Physician Assistant, Dietetics, and Physical Therapy programs, Rutgers College of Nursing, Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, and the Rutgers School of Social Work then reconvened into 30 interdisciplinary small groups, led by the faculty facilitators, to discuss the team approach to health care delivery.

The case scenario was designed to promote teamwork and a better understanding of the contributions that each discipline has to offer in delivering quality health care. The students were challenged to develop a new understanding of the roles of the various providers, their value to the team, and how decisions are made in a team setting. The initial feedback has been very positive and we are in the process of analyzing pre and post session surveys of student attitudes using the Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale (RIPLS) Questionnaire.

An array of interprofessional events such as collaborative simulation, workshops and case studies are being planned for the upcoming spring semester.