

## Opportunities and Challenges of Interprofessional Teams

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Interprofessional teamwork - the collaboration between multiple health professionals from different backgrounds - enables the highest quality care to be delivered to patients, families, caregivers, and communities.

The description may sound like the kind of team we normally think of in hospitals. The need for collaboration between professionals, however, is not confined to hospitals. More than just sharing data or communicating between healthcare professionals, getting the most effective results for patients requires collaboration between interprofessional teams. Each member has unique insights and perspectives to offer about the patient and together offer a holistic advantage. Effective collaboration requires recognition of this and a commensurate team mindset.

Smaller, multidisciplinary clinics seek to offer patients more focused and holistic care, based on interprofessional models of care.

### How Interprofessional Clinics are Changing Healthcare

Advances in knowledge bring increasing complexity to our healthcare system. An unfortunate byproduct is worsening delays in care for more complex cases. A single patient may be bounced around to various specialists for one single issue. Unnecessary delays at critical times and fragmented care can lead to patients that ultimately slip through the cracks, lacking proper or timely treatment. (1)

Interprofessional teams take a fragmented system and streamline the process for the patient. There are many more benefits to a multidisciplinary clinic, such as:

- In a multidisciplinary care setting, it is much easier for the patient to manage their condition
- It offers a consolidated interdisciplinary approach to diagnose, assess, and treat health conditions
- It offers a collective knowledge in one visit that is nearly impossible in more typical, fragmented circumstances
- The system enhances communication between clinicians and patients and improves safety

These benefits have led to many hospitals and clinics rethinking their care delivery and adopting a multidisciplinary approach to care. (1)

Healthcare's future is multidisciplinary teams, but these teams have a number of challenges as well.

## **Addressing Collaborative Challenges in Interprofessional Teams**

Collaboration among providers is hindered by power imbalances between patients and healthcare providers and between different providers, which presents a major challenge for interprofessional teams. Organizational systems need to be redesigned to foster collaborative relationships and information sharing among providers, health care professionals, and patients. Here are a few tips for building strong collaboration.

- **Cultivate an appreciation for other disciplines.** Members should cultivate an appreciation for the roles of the other healthcare professionals on their team. Healthcare professionals often have little or no knowledge of other disciplines in healthcare. This can contribute to silos and developing biases underestimating the value of other disciplines. Team members should learn a bit about the other disciplines, enough to provide a sense of respect for the value they bring.
- **Use a flat team structure.** Team structures that are flat are more effective than hierarchical ones because they create supportive, mutually respectful spaces. The unique contributions and accomplishments of each team member should be acknowledged. To ensure a sense of safety and belonging, interprofessional teams should empower their members, which could look like soliciting their input in group decision-making sessions. Keeping small groups from forming out of the larger team should help prevent silos and barriers from forming as well.

## **Weighing the Costs of Multidisciplinary Care Models**

### **Are patients getting better care or are they just getting more of it?**

The team may add tests, consultations, and treatments that are not evidence-based and are of little benefit to the patient's condition. Policy-makers, for example, observed that a patient being treated regularly by a radiation therapist increased their chances of undergoing radiation therapy. The same is likely true for any specialist on the team. There is nothing wrong with utilizing services that are already available, but not when they are used simply because they are there. It can become costly for the patient and the healthcare system. Additionally, it is time-wasting and potentially dangerous.

### **The interprofessional model does not guarantee lower risks**

Controlling costs, meeting patient needs, engaging in effective collaboration, and reducing liability risks all depend on how interprofessional teams are managed. This model of care does not increase liability risks. How it is deployed determines the level of risk, whether for the better or worse.

### **Who is liable when something goes wrong?**

Yet another consideration is who is liable when things go wrong? In team-based situations, who takes responsibility for patient care and outcomes?

A multidisciplinary clinic is a small, but complex environment that warrants its own specialist insurance policy.

### **MedThree Knows Healthcare Facilities**

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Sources:

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