LETTERS

Interprofessional Involvement Provides Educational Experience to Pharmacy Students

To the Editor: In order for advances to occur in drug therapy and discovery, a team-based effort is essential. The focus of the 2010 AACP Teacher's Seminar was the development and educational experiences that relate to interdisciplinary interprofessionalism in the pharmacy school environment. In fact, an article recently published in this *Journal* demonstrated a positive impact in student attitudes during an interdisciplinary experience.¹ However, many challenges are faced by pharmacy schools when incorporating interprofessionalism into a curriculum. Here we describe 2 opportunities through which we as students have found the importance of interprofessionalism. The stories that we relate emphasize that classroom activities might not be the most proficient context to develop interprofessionalism, but working with other disciplines in real world activities can be a way to overcome this challenging obstacle.

Participating in an Interprofessional Health Fair: Christian Connely's Experience

I know that for some pharmacy students there is a feeling of apprehension about working with people from different disciplines; thus, I sometimes wonder if pharmacy students are socially prepared to work in such a diverse field. To prepare myself for this interprofessional environment, I decided to embark in creating an atmosphere that included other healthcare professional students. A health fair provided an enormous opportunity for students to work together and see firsthand a patient's perspective. The health fair included pharmacy students from Samford University and medical students from the University of Alabama Birmingham (UAB). Because there was no foundation from previous collaborative projects, the day prior to the event students from both parties met at the health fair location to determine the workflow. One successful consensus from the meetings was the pairing of pharmacy students and medical students at each point-of-contact station. At one point during the health fair I was surprised to see something that was not noticeable earlier. I saw open dialogue and friendly conversations between students. I saw students conversing over the health of patients, and even conversations about similar interests. At that exact point, the "bar-

rier" that we hear so often fell. The benefits of this project instilled that we are not just one person who delivers health-care, but we are all part of one body that delivers care.

Shadowing an Interprofessional Faculty Team: Chris Chapleau's Experience

After I received my bachelor's degree, I wanted to pursue a neuroscience research career; thus, I entered the Neurobiology PhD program at UAB where I worked in the laboratory of Lucas Pozzo-Miller, PhD. While my time in graduate school was rewarding I felt disconnected between what I was doing in a basic science laboratory and what was occurring in the clinical practice setting. All this changed, however, when I began to shadow Alan Percy, MD, and Jane Lane, RN, in the Rett Syndrome Clinic at UAB. I saw how a healthcare team can function as one, each of whom had a specific role providing helpful expertise to the patient and their families. Through this experience I also began to realize how much Dr. Percy and Dr. Pozzo-Miller worked together. They often would share ideas that they have obtained in their clinic or laboratory, thus expanding each other's research focus. This experience also showed me that for medical breakthroughs to occur, professionals from different areas of science and healthcare will need to work together to contribute their specialized expertise to a common goal.

Looking at our interprofessional experiences, you might notice that both are quite different, yet for us, as students, each experience had a tremendous impact. Even though our didactics provided a strong foundation, it was our first-hand experiences that instilled that the best approach should be a team-based approach. Due to our early experiences in an interprofessional environment we both strongly advocate that the best practice should use all members of the healthcare and biomedical research teams. We hope that our experiences will motivate other students to search out similar opportunities. By doing so, the student, the healthcare system, and patients will benefit.

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REFERENCES

1. Shrader S, McRae L, King WM, Kern D. A simulated interprofessional rounding experience in a clinical assessment course. *Am J Pharm Educ.* 2011;75(4):Article 61.