

Chronic Disease Management: An Evidence-Based Interprofessional Pilot Project

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Abstract

Background: On a daily basis, primary care providers face the epidemic problem of managing patients with chronic diseases. The purpose of this project was to implement an interprofessional pilot project in the community.

Methods: An interprofessional pilot project using undergraduate Nutrition and Exercise Physiology (NEP) students at Washington State University Spokane and Community Health Association of Spokane (CHAS) to teach Healthy Living Workshops (HLW) to people with chronic diseases was implemented. Prior to HLW training, NEP students were surveyed about self-efficacy to teach core content in five areas: disease prevention, health enrichment, nutrition, and stress and weight management. Additionally, five questions assessed confidence in teaching when faced with specific challenges. Next, Patients taking the HLW were measured using the Patient Activation Measurement (PAM). Finally, the three

stakeholders, two from CHAS and one from the NEP faculty were interviewed to evaluate the project.

Results: Sixteen NEP students received HLW training. Student's self-efficacy in their ability to teach the five-core content increased in all areas. While confidence in teaching when faced with specific challenges decreased in all areas. Only 3 patients participated in the first series of classes. Due to the small sample size, no conclusions can be made about patient responses from the PAM data. HLWs are still in progress at this time. Stakeholders received the project positively. Main benefits to NEP students were: an increase in students who could offer HLWs, exposure to real patients with complex chronic conditions, and development of chronic disease management skills. Barriers included cost and labor to CHAS.

Implications: Chronic disease management is a complex problem that needs diverse approaches. The interprofessional pilot project emphasized the need to continue to develop and work towards a solution that encourages a team-wise approach. It also identified barriers to engaging patients and understanding patient activation.