



# Interdisciplinary Continuing Education: Can it Improve Patient Care?

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Health-care delivery is an increasingly complex activity. Collaboration and interaction between a number of health professionals is a key component to effective patient care, both in the hospital and community environment. The new literature on patient safety indicates many adverse events result from less than optimal teamwork between health professionals.

The health sciences literature suggests health professionals from different disciplines could benefit from learning together. Benefits include:

- an increased awareness of the importance of communication and co-operation among health professionals and
- a better understanding of the role of other health professionals in the care continuum.

However, the literature to date indicates little evidence to support the link between interdisciplinary learning and improved health care.

Traditionally, continuing education programs have operated in silos by profession. Although many CME programs invite and encourage other health professionals to attend, they are rarely involved in the planning and development process for these programs. Indeed, many interprofes-

sional meetings have “doctor” and “nurse” breakout tracks after a common plenary.

Thanks to the leadership of Cancer Care Nova Scotia, the Dalhousie office of CME has partnered with nursing and pharmacy colleagues to develop 10 interactive, evidence-based modules in cancer education with a focus on:

- pain management,
- symptom management and
- treatment side-effects.

These programs have been developed in partnership and each module is written by a physician, nurse and pharmacist. The modules will be delivered in an interdisciplinary format in local communities throughout Nova Scotia.

We have also designed a program evaluation component to the program, which will measure readiness to change and enhancement of interdisciplinary awareness as an important outcome of the program.

We encourage CME providers across Canada to explore interprofessional learning opportunities and link educational outcomes to improve patient care whenever possible.

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