

A Flexible, Self-Directed Course in Interprofessional Aging and Palliative Care

Louise Aronson, Adam Moylan, Lynda Mackin, Andrew Leeds, Stephanie Rennke,
Joan Abrams, Meg Wallhagen

University of California, San Francisco

aronsonl@medicine.ucsf.edu

Objectives: Interprofessional education is believed to enhance collaboration essential to high quality geriatric and palliative care. A faculty and student committee developed a multi-modal, competency-based course, Interprofessional Aging and Palliative Care (IAPC), to increase geriatric and palliative care skills, interprofessional education, and interest in the care of older and dying adults by early exposure of medical, nursing, and pharmacy students to interprofessional geriatrics and palliative care education, clinical experiences, and mentors.

Methods: To encourage participation regardless of ultimate specialty, learners develop self-directed learning plans from a menu of didactics, clinical work, and independent learning activities. IAPC may be taken quarterly or longitudinally, and can be repeated up to 6 times. After each elective credit unit, students submit an activities list, a course evaluation, and self-assessment on relevant competencies. Additional curriculum evaluation includes tracking elective enrollment, enrollment in other geriatrics and palliative care rotations, and number of students requesting geriatrics placements and preceptors.

Results: Compared to a prior version of the interprofessional course, the IAPC course increased geriatrics elective enrollment 6-fold, from 8-12 students to 50-70 drawn from the Schools of Nursing, Medicine, and Pharmacy. The flexible course structure, added clinical opportunities, inclusion of palliative care, and plan for a certificate of added competence in geriatrics and palliative care all appeared to increase student interest.

Conclusions: A flexible, interprofessional elective course can help significant numbers of health professions students address aging-related training gaps. A certificate program is under development that will involve a portfolio of relevant courses, clerkships, and scholarly work.

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