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Effects of Interdisciplinary Discussions on Attitudes and Perceptions Among Dental, Social Work and Pharmacy Students.

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Objective: Interdisciplinary teamwork and collaboration are important learning experiences for health professional students. This study evaluates students' attitudes and perceptions about interdisciplinary learning. Methods: Subjects of the study are health professional students participating in an interdisciplinary project involving three disciplines: Dentistry, Pharmacy and Social Work. These students worked together in the University of Washington Mobile Geriatric Dental Clinic sites in adult day health centers in King County, Washington. The design of this study is a pre/post 15-item Likert-scaled survey, administered anonymously to the students before and after their participation in the interdisciplinary project. Categories of questions in the survey included knowledge of each profession, attitudes towards interdisciplinary care, and project participation. Student demographic data was also collected. The averages of the pre- and post-survey scores were calculated. The 2-tailed student t-test was used for statistical analysis to assess differences, with significance set at p-value ≤ 0.05. Results: Data from 12 participants, (6 dental, 4 pharmacy and 2 social work students, average age 25.6 ± 1.57 years, 9 females and 3 males), showed an increase in the students' knowledge of each other's professions and improvements in attitude towards interdisciplinary learning after participation in the project. The mean pre- and post-Likert scaled scores were 3.95 ± 0.196 and 4.42 ± 0.145, respectively ($p = 4.94e^{-08}$). Implications: The results of this study showed interdisciplinary learning activities impact positively on a student's attitudes and/or perceptions of each other's profession. Interdisciplinary activities involving different health professional programs should be encouraged and promoted.