

Interprofessional Practice – what is it really and why does it matter?

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Interprofessional Practice is often described as promoting health professionals to work cooperatively, effectively and efficiently together to enhance patient care. Over recent years there has been significant interest in developing programs to facilitate interprofessional clinical education for pre-entry level health care students. These programs provide opportunities for students to learn about each other, from each other and help develop work ready graduates. However, less attention has been focussed on developing staff capacity in interprofessional approaches. At its best, interprofessional approaches have the potential to more effectively highlight patient needs, improve safety, reduce duplication and improve access to the appropriate services. However, what happens in actual clinical practice? Is what we commonly refer to as “interprofessional practice” just another form of multi-disciplinary care? Does the rhetoric make any difference to physiotherapists and how we treat our patients? This presentation will discuss how interprofessional practice supports safe and effective patient care. We will explore some of the barriers and pitfalls encountered when establishing interprofessional practice models. Northern Health has undertaken several projects to improve the patients’ journey through enhancing our interprofessional models of care. Examples of successful interprofessional practice will be presented. Reflections of the physiotherapists working in acute and ambulatory care will be discussed and mechanisms to facilitate practice will be described.