Integration of Gerodontology within Interprofessional Education

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INTRODUCTION

The need for interdisciplinary management of the ageing individual is highly emphasised in the undergraduate Gerodontology curricula guidelines in both Europe and USA.

• Communication with the professional health care team and the patients’ volunteer carers.
• Interdisciplinary management of the ageing individual.
• The role of the dentist on interdisciplinary teams in health care for older adults

Co-morbidity, frailty, functional impairment, dependency and various socioeconomic barriers to oral care require a close collaboration between members of the health care team. Furthermore, the limited access of frail older people to dental care demands training of non-dental professionals in oral health assessment and implementation of oral health prevention strategies. Collaborative practice among physicians, dentists, nurses, and other formal and informal caregivers in the care for the elders may lead to better health outcomes. In this context, adequate training of the elders’ health care team in interprofessional education (IPE) principles is of paramount importance.

AIM

The aim of this study was to review the literature about the participation of dental students, faculty and dental professionals in interprofessional education activities in Gerodontology, describe the interventions applied and the outcomes reported.

METHODS

PubMed and Scopus were searched for publications on interprofessional education activities in Gerodontology, in the English language, up to November 2016. The following search terms were used for PubMed: (interprofessional[tiab] OR interdisciplinary[tiab] OR multidisciplinary[tiab] OR collaboration[tiab] AND (geriatric[tiab] OR elderly[tiab] OR older[tiab]) AND (dentistry OR dental OR oral health[tiab] AND education). Similar terms were used for Scopus. The exclusion criteria were: not about formal education, not about dental profession, not about interactive learning, not about geriatric dentistry, no results reported, not in English

RESULTS

• Seven articles were included in the final analysis; one published in 1981 and all others after 2012.
• Five referred to undergraduate training and two to faculty training.
• Of the 16 discarded articles, two described collaborative practice initiatives, four multiprofessional education courses, and four spontaneous and informal interprofessional learning opportunities.
• Dental students or faculty members participated in all courses. Other professions included medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, optometry, pharmacy, physical therapy, physician assistant studies, social work, and law.
• The interventions in undergraduate education usually included didactic courses, team home visits with discipline-specific patients interviews/assessments, followed by team care plan sessions, where each discipline offered its point of view on treatment planning
• The outcome measures varied significantly among studies. Only one study reported on the outcomes of IPE specifically to dental students, showing either no changes or negative effects. Other studies reported overall positive effects, without however any specific discipline-related analyses.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSIONS

Very few articles were related to IPE in Gerodontology. The limited research data and the methodological variation recorded in the literature preclude drawing a clear conclusion about optimal IPE interventions. More studies using better experimental designs and validated instruments for courses’ evaluation are necessary.

IPE course in Geriatrics at Boston University

Boston University piloted a new inter-professional education programme preparing medical and dental students to work collaboratively to provide comprehensive care for older adult patients. The programme includes a didactic module on oral and systemic health and hands on experience in performing intra-oral screenings.

REFERENCES