

Enhancing Interprofessional Collaboration



Carole Chatalalsingh, PhD, RD
Practice Advisor &
Policy Analyst

The integration and coordination of the interprofessional health care (IPC) team is increasingly recognized as a key factor in safe, effective and efficient health care delivery. Health-care providers are expected to engage in collaborative

practice and share their expertise within the IPC environment. Dietitians partnering in health care teams are seeking guidance from the College as they recognize that working in IPC teams does not necessarily mean that they are practising collaboratively or that their team approach is client-centred.

To support dietitians to be safe, competent and ethical within interprofessional health care teams, the College of Dietitians of Ontario is expanding its professional practice program to create new direction and education to promote a better understanding of collaborative dietetic practice.

As a new *Practice Advisor and Policy Analyst* for the College, I am thrilled to have the opportunity to make a difference by facilitating learning and creating educational opportunities for dietitians to discover and transform their skills as they take on new roles in IPC environments. Dietitians have an ethical obligation to seek new ways to achieve the goal of safe and high quality client care. In the *Code of Ethics for Dietitians in Canada*, dietitians pledge to

Interprofessional Care

The provision of comprehensive health services to clients by multiple health care professionals who work collaboratively to deliver the best quality of care in every health care setting.⁵

"work co-operatively with colleagues, other professionals, and laypersons". What does collaborative practice mean within the IPC environment?

COLLABORATIVE PRACTICE

Collaborative practice is seen as members going beyond just working in a team to synergistically learning to practice together as a team to influence the client/patient centered care. "It involves the continuous interaction of two or more professionals or disciplines, organized into a common effort to explore and solve common issues, with the best possible participation of the client. It is designed to promote the active participation of each discipline in client care. It enhances client- and family-centered goals and values, provides mechanisms for continuous communication among caregivers, optimizes staff participation in clinical decision-making within and across disciplines, and fosters respect for disciplinary contributions of all professionals."¹ (See Figure 1, page 6.)

INTEGRATING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

Evidence shows that, when health care professionals work and learn together to share their knowledge and skills, the quality of client care improves.^{2, 4} There is increasing interest in working in an interprofessional manner and many health care organizations place high priority in educating and training novice health care professionals and students. However, support for and models of interprofessional care approaches remain relatively new to more experienced health care professionals.

In the spirit of improving care and developing an understanding of how to best engage in interprofessional collaboration and learning at the level of the team, the College's educational opportunities for dietitians will focus on integrating education theories into collaborative dietetic practices.³ This will involve 1) offering and implementing a professional development webinar series, 2) creating blogs

and forums for dietitians including seeking input from members, and assessing needs, as well as partnering with dietetic, academic and practice leaders in the community and 3) a developing a series of *résumé* articles.

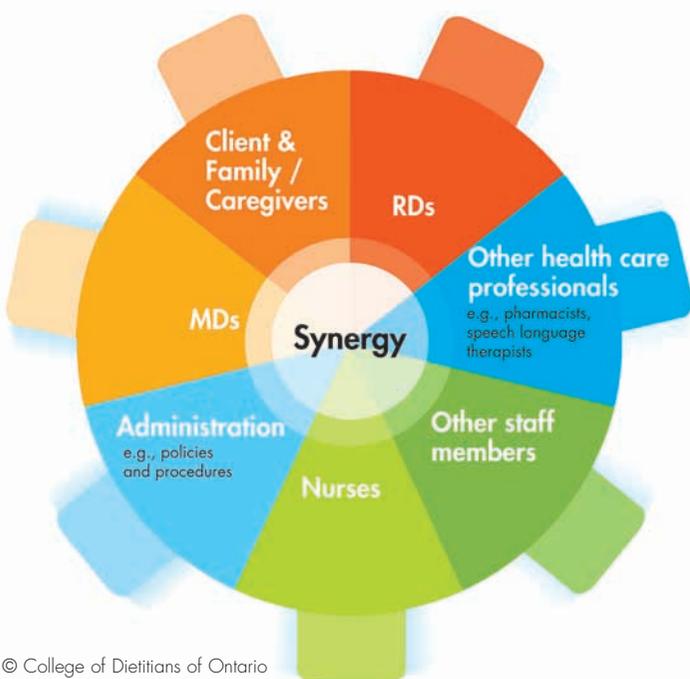
ENHANCING INTERPROFESSIONAL HEALTH CARE TEAMS

Dietitians have already been exposed to interprofessional collaborative concepts through the College workshops held in 2009. A webinar series will be developed in 2012 based on the work started in those workshops. The webinars will focus on client-centred care and interprofessional care within teams on a day-to-day basis. The primary objectives of the webinars will be to:

1. Introduce common issues and challenges of interprofessional collaboration in dietetic work.
2. Engage in critical reflections about dietetic/health standards in caring for clients and the values underpinning them.
3. Identify opportunities for future directives, innovation and change.

Figure 1: Synergetic Team

Interprofessional team learning is a social learning activity that benefits the individual, the team, and most importantly, the client.



Interprofessional Collaboration

An interprofessional process of communication and decision-making that enables the separate and shared knowledge and skills of care providers to synergistically influence the client/patient care provided.⁶

IPC ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS

The College will be publishing a professional practice blog for dietitians which will include topics focused on client-centred care and interprofessional care within teams on a day-to-day basis. The primary objectives of the blog will be to:

1. provide a collegial venue for sharing ideas, questions and expertise about the changing landscape of dietetic and interprofessional practice environments;
2. to engage in point-of-care information sharing and decision-making;
3. to elicit feedback from members and professional associations in enhancing interprofessional innovations and to develop a plan to enhance the knowledge of organizational leaders.

Information about the professional practice blog will be sent to you by email shortly. Look for it in your email box.

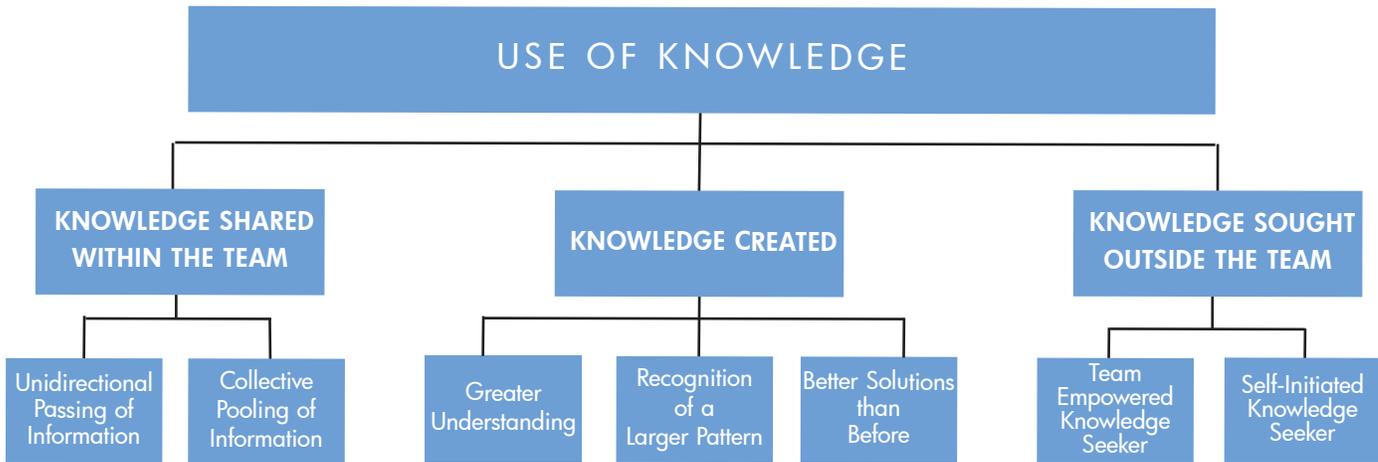
AWARENESS, LEARNING AND POSITIVE ATTITUDES

While the scope of practice statement set out in the *Dietetics Act* describes in broad terms the focus of our profession as individual practitioners, IPC describes team expectations and focuses on a collaborative approach to health care. Within the IPC environment, dietitians are often faced with learning new roles and procedures. Developing a more in-depth understanding of the role of dietitians as collaborators is needed.

Dietitians have a professional obligation to examine themselves and their practices with a view to expanding the profession of dietetics. The *résumé* articles will help dietitians develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills in using their knowledge, skills and judgment effectively in the IPC environment.

“Use of Knowledge” Framework

within the context of interprofessional collaboration ^{7, 8}



INTERPROFESSIONAL TEAM LEARNING

Interprofessional care is not static. IPC teams are dynamic and create synergy by learning together and discovering new knowledge, growth and innovation. Interprofessional team learning is a social process involving a community of client-centred care providers including health professions, staff members, students and trainees, and family caregivers. The IPC team is focused on communication, mutual respect, interaction and participation. IPC teams not only deliver effective health care together, but also learn together in their daily practice.

When health care professionals work and learn together sharing their knowledge and skills, the quality of client care improves.¹ Team learning is a process through which knowledge is shared, created and sought in order to benefit the individual, the team, and most importantly, the client. With health care moving from health profession silos to IPC teams, it seems only natural that dietitians should also be making a concurrent shift of focus from individual self-directed learning models to models of interprofessional team learning.

In the spring *résumé*, we will examine the “Use of Knowledge” Framework, above, within the context of synergistic teams in practice. The purpose will be to show how team-related knowledge and interprofessional team learning promotes the delivery of safe, ethical and competent quality client care.

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