

# Learning together: The image gently interprofessional simulation for nursing and allied health students<sup>1</sup>



Michele A. Pfaff DNP(c), MSN, RN\*

Carolinas College of Health Sciences, Charlotte, NC 28203, USA

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**Abstract** An interprofessional simulation was developed to teach the concepts of the *Image Gently* campaign and to improve collaboration among nursing and radiologic technology students. The simulation allowed students to interact across disciplines to provide safe and effective care. The project results indicated that students felt the simulation provided for interprofessional teamwork and was a good use of training time. The students also reported understanding of the *Image Gently* concepts they can apply to future professional practice.

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Preparing health professionals to enter the workforce is a challenging task given the ever-changing face of health care. Health professions faculty are in the position to use evidence-based teaching strategies with students while providing safe and supervised opportunities for essential skill development. Professional communication and collaboration are identified as critical professional behaviors that must be taught and refined in health care education (American Association of Colleges of Nurses, 2010; O'Daniel & Rosenstein, 2008). The Institute of Medicine created a research council consisting of experts across disciplines to develop a set of core competencies for integration into health professions education. These core competencies include patient-centered care, interprofessional team education, evidence-based practice, quality improvement, and informatics (National Research Council, 2003). The research council issued a statement recommending all health professionals be educated as part of

interprofessional teams with a focus on evidence-based practice and quality improvement. The authors of the Quality and Safety for Nursing Education (QSEN) Project developed a list of core competencies, which include collaboration and teamwork and align with the IOM goals (Cronenwett, Sherwood, & Gelmon, 2009). Cooperation and coordination between health care disciplines are key components of the *Image Gently* campaign, which main focus includes radiation safety for all pediatric clients across settings.

The *Image Gently* campaign is an initiative of the Alliance for Radiation Safety in Pediatric Imaging, a 13-member organization consisting of leading medical societies, agencies, and regulatory groups. The goals of the campaign are to impact patient care and change practice through an educational and awareness campaign regarding radiation protection when imaging children (Goske et al., 2008). It is estimated that 4.1 million pediatric computed tomography (CT) examinations were performed between 2005 and 2006 (Conference of Radiation Control Program Directors, U.S. Department of Health, Services Food, & Administration, 2012). An article by Broder, Fordham, and Warchauer (2007) reported an increase in the number of pediatric cervical spine and chest CT scans of roughly 300–400% in the emergency

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 704 355 7574; fax: +1 704 355 5967.  
E-mail address: Michele.pfaff@carolinacollege.edu

setting. Considering these statistics, it is imperative that all health professionals interacting with the pediatric population receive education on the principles described in the *Image Gently* campaign regardless of setting.

The purpose of this article is to describe an interprofessional education (IPE) initiative. The initiative used a simulation-based design involving students enrolled in two professional programs to introduce the concepts of *Image Gently*. Students' perceptions of their learning related to the five learning outcomes of the simulation were assessed: (a) the clinical diagnostic workup of pediatric appendicitis; (b) the *Image Gently* concepts; (c) each discipline's role in health care; (d) teamwork and communication skills; and (e) the benefits of team training using simulation.

## 1. Background

### 1.1. Literature review

A review of the literature examined research studies of IPE in health care education programs, including simulation-based designs. The assertion of IPE is that if health professional students learn together, they will be better prepared to function collaboratively as a team. This collaboration leads to a more cohesive team and improves overall patient care. Reeves, Perrier, Goldman, Freeth, and Zwarenstein (2013) conducted a meta-analysis to appraise the effectiveness of IPE interventions compared with separate, profession-specific education interventions and to assess the effectiveness of IPE interventions compared with no education intervention. The authors concluded that, although some positive outcomes were reported, there was inadequate data to make generalizations about the effectiveness of IPE interventions. In addition, a systematic review was conducted by Lapkin, Levett-Jones, and Gilligan (2013). They reviewed all randomized control trials and quasi-experimental studies where two or more health professional groups engaged in IPE. The authors concluded that IPE can augment students' attitudes and perceptions toward collaboration and decision making. Using IPE to teach communication and clinical skills was judged to be inconclusive and requiring further investigation. All of the studies included in this systematic review used a combination of an educational module or workshop along with an interprofessional team activity or presentation.

Several studies were found that examined the role of simulation and IPE using nursing students and either medical students or resident physicians. The literature provides few studies involving the use of IPE with nursing students and other health professionals outside of medicine. These few studies supported simulation as an effective teaching and learning strategy for IPE. Van Soeren et al. (2011) identified themes that are useful when planning simulated IPE and contribute to full engagement in the learning process. Simulation provides the benefit of collaborative learning in

a safe, controlled environment (Senette, O'Malley, & Hendrix, 2013; Titzer, Swenty, & Hoehn, 2012).

An examination of student perceptions and attitudes toward IPE helps identify barriers and contribute to increased understanding of team member roles. A study by Sigalet, Donnon, and Grant (2012) reported improvement in students' perceptions of and attitudes toward IPE initiatives. Students reported an increase in awareness of communication styles, respect for other professionals' roles, and positive attitudes (Brock et al., 2013; Senette et al., 2013).

Team collaboration and communication can potentially improve patient outcomes. The need for increasing communication, exposure, and problem solving using interprofessional teams has been reported. In addition, students convey the lack of opportunities to practice collaboration and independent problem solving during traditional clinical experiences (Senette et al., 2013; Titzer et al., 2012). A significant shift in students understanding the benefits of interprofessional training and the ability to advocate within teams was reported by Brock et al. (2013).

Researchers reported that using an interprofessional approach to simulation provides considerable benefits and several challenges. Benefits include budgetary relief, reduced faculty workload, and relieved scheduling constraints in the simulation laboratory. The challenges include physical space to accommodate multiple disciplines, the coordination of multiple schedules, faculty preconceptions, lack of faculty training in IPE concepts, and meeting each program's specific accreditation requirements (Brock et al., 2013; Senette et al., 2013; Titzer et al., 2012).

### 1.2. Image Gently

The need for the *Image Gently* Interprofessional Simulation between nursing and radiologic technology students arose from local factors. Health care system administration identified teamwork as a core value within the mission of the system and included statements of support within the overall strategic plan. The system charged each division to implement interprofessional strategies within their daily operations. As part of this overall system, the college of health sciences administration turned to faculty to develop innovative ideas to address the education of future health care providers. The *Image Gently* Interprofessional Simulation supported the strategic initiative within both the college and the larger health system to develop synergy between all elements of the organization. Within the college of health sciences, the school of nursing utilized simulation within the curriculum. The school of radiologic technology did not utilize simulation, but faculty reported interest in examining possibilities for collaboration.

### 1.3. Framework

The World Health Organization (WHO) Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative

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