

The Role of an International Cross Cultural Interprofessional Healthcare Immersion Program in Doctor of Physical Therapy Education: an Educational Case Report

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Purpose

The purpose of this educational case report is to describe an interprofessional international cross-cultural immersion healthcare program and to discuss the role of this program in the development of Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students' cultural competence, interprofessionalism, and social responsibility.

Description

The Ghana Cross Cultural Health Immersion (GCCHI) program provides annual primary health care services and education in Sekondi, Takeradi and outlying communities in Ghana. Student and faculty participants from the University of New England (UNE) work in conjunction with the Ghana Health Services, Cape Coast University medical students and community health workers in order to meet the health needs of underserved Ghanaian populations. While immersed in the cross-cultural service learning environment, the DPT students engage in interprofessional collaborative care with other students and the Ghanaian and American providers. The GCCHI integration of western health practices with folk medicine is an integral in provision of culturally competent health care. Students and faculty also participate in cultural activities outside of the clinic during their stay. Upon their return students participate in self reflection exercises and a campus presentation.

Observations

After performing patient care in this environment, DPT students reported an increase in confidence with interprofessional communication that they were not able to achieve on previous clinical practicums. Students also reported a new found appreciation for patients' cultural expectations and needs and its impact on treatment and plan of care. The faculty and student collaboration outside of a classroom and during actual patient care was a valuable learning experience for many DPT students.

Conclusions

Students reported an improvement in their interprofessionalism, cultural sensitivity and social responsibility after participating in the GCCHI. In the future using evidence based outcome measures would allow for program directors to better measure program outcomes and improve the program's impact on students the people of Ghana.

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Interprofessional Education

Interprofessional education, as described by the World Health Organization, involves students from different professions learning "about, from and with each other to enable effective collaboration and improve health outcomes."



GCCHI program participants August 2013.

Ghanaian providers and community health workers, Cape Coast University medical students, American providers, & UNE faculty and students all work together to provide sustainable healthcare to the underserved Ghanaian communities.

DEPARTMENT	STUDENT	FACULTY	PRACTITIONER	ALUMNI
College of Medicine	0	2	0	0
Dental Hygiene	1	0	0	0
Doctor of Osteopathy	0	0	1	0
Education	1	0	0	0
Exercise Science/Pre-Physical Therapy	1	0	0	0
Health Science	1	0	0	0
Master of Public Health	5	1	0	0
Medical Biology	9	0	0	0
Nurse Practitioner	0	0	2	0
Nursing	20	5	2	2
Occupational Therapy	8	1	0	0
Pharmacy	2	6	0	0
Physical Therapy	19	3	0	1
Physician Assistant	14	1	0	2
Pre-Pharmacy	1	0	0	0
Social Work	5	0	0	0
Undeclared	2	0	0	0
TOTALS:	89	19	5	5



Sekondi Clinic Pharmacy

A Pharmacy professor and student work together with a Public Health student in the pharmacy. Most medications are purchased by the program from a local Pharmacist in order to support the local economy and provide medications that are culturally relevant.

Cross Cultural Immersion

Cross-cultural immersion involves evaluation of one's own culture while gaining understanding of another's culture through living and working within that cultural environment.



Ghanaian Livelihood

Students observe first hand the aspects of their patient's daily life while living in the community. DPT students report that the first hand observation allows them to provide sustainable therapeutic exercises and patient education for those patients presenting with work related pain.



Elmina Castle

Program participants take a guided historical tour of Elmina Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, as a cultural learning experience. Students and faculty reflect on the tour as a meaningful and valuable cultural experience.



Community Health Workers

A community health worker assists a DPT student during a patient treatment. They are integral to GCCHI as they serve as interpreters during patient care as well as cultural ambassadors throughout the program.

Service Learning

A service learning program is one that combines learning outcomes with community service in a way that enhances the personal and professional growth of students while strengthening communities.



Student Mentoring

DPT students and a Ghanaian physical therapist discuss the plan of care for a patient's wounds. The clinic environment promotes professional collaboration and mentoring between students with different knowledge levels of patient care.



Sekondi Clinic Lab

As most patients present with Malaria-like symptoms, providing an efficient test ensures that the patient receives the proper health care. DPT students have an opportunity to perform Malaria testing, playing a vital role in a streamlined interprofessional clinic.



Patient Education

A DPT student performs wound care while educating a patient on how to continue to care for her wound at home in the Sekondi Primary Clinic in 2013. As in the US, culturally relevant patient education is a key component to effective and sustainable health care.