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Outcomes from an Interprofessional Educational Model for Teaching Community Health

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Background: Interprofessional team work is widely recognized as an essential component of our health care delivery system. At UMass, an interprofessional educational partnership was established with the goal of promoting interprofessional teaching to medical and nursing students in the area of community health.

The UMMS Interprofessional Educational Model:

- The partners comprised the School of Medicine; the Graduate School of Nursing; the Department of Family Medicine and Community Health; the Statewide Area Health Education Center (AHEC); and Community Catalyst, a non-profit patient advocacy organization.
- The interprofessional educational experience featured a 3-hour "Walk in my Shoes" (WIMS) simulation session (developed by Community Catalyst) in which barriers to health care access are "experienced" by students and faculty in a simulated large group exercise.
- In AY 05-06, all 1st year medical students and all 2nd year nursing students from the Graduate Entry Pathway participated in the simulation session, conducted as part of a 2-week Community Health Clerkship. An interprofessional team of faculty representing nurses and physicians from diverse clinical disciplines and health professionals from a variety of community-based agencies and services also participated in the simulation session.



Methods: Four evaluations were developed and administered to 141 participants (medical students=101; nursing students=40) to measure the effectiveness of major components of this interprofessional educational experience. Students completed an overall evaluation (See Figure 1) at the end of the 2-week clerkship experience (n=124) and a WIMS simulation session evaluation (See Figure 2) upon completion of the session (n=121). Eighty-one participants completed both pre- and post-tests (matched design) of the WIMS simulation session (See Figure 3).

Community Health Clerkship Overall Evaluation Form

Figure 1

The form includes sections for:

- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., understand basic concept of Community Health, understand the concept of 'community' as a unit of health care).
- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., develop a sensitivity to the needs of a specific population, develop an appreciation of the need to work as a health care provider with community agencies).
- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., understand common public health strategies for preventing health-related problems, develop problem-solving skills with respect to assessing and evaluating the status and relationships of community health problems).
- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., understand the role of the community health care system, develop an understanding of the role of the Primary Care health care provider in relationship to a selected community health problem).
- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., individuals in my profession are able to work closely with individuals in other professions, individuals in my profession respect the work done by my profession).
- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., individuals in my profession are able to work closely with individuals in other professions, individuals in my profession respect the work done by my profession).

Walk in My Shoes Simulation Session Evaluation, Pre-Test, and Post-Test Forms

Figure 2

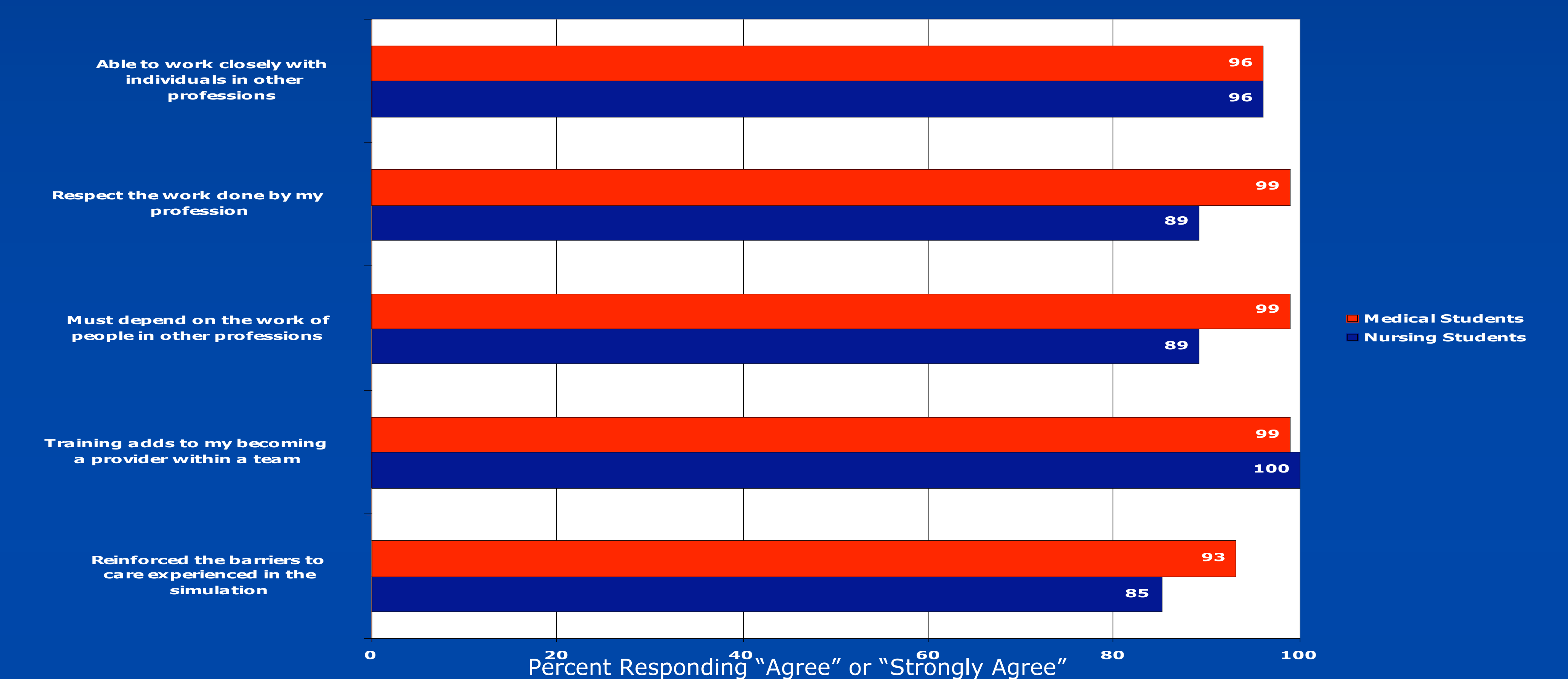
The forms include sections for:

- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., understand the importance of community health, understand the concept of 'community' as a unit of health care).
- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., develop a sensitivity to the needs of a specific population, develop an appreciation of the need to work as a health care provider with community agencies).
- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., understand common public health strategies for preventing health-related problems, develop problem-solving skills with respect to assessing and evaluating the status and relationships of community health problems).
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- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., individuals in my profession are able to work closely with individuals in other professions, individuals in my profession respect the work done by my profession).
- How well you are able to address the following course goals (e.g., individuals in my profession are able to work closely with individuals in other professions, individuals in my profession respect the work done by my profession).

Figure 3

Results: The evaluations completed at the end of the Community Health Clerkship showed that more than 90% rated "agree" or "strongly agree" on each of five items pertaining to the importance of interprofessional teamwork among health care professionals (see graph below).

Interprofessional Teamwork Among Health Care Professionals



For the WIMS simulation session, over 90% of the student participants rated "agree" or "strongly agree" when asked if the experience provided an opportunity to reflect on and empathize with the experience of medically underserved people, and over 90% "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the topic was essential to their medical training. Students were asked to describe issues in which they had a "better understanding" and/or "increased awareness" as a result of their participation in the WIMS simulation session. Of those responding, 4 common themes emerged from the content analysis of the medical students' and nursing students' responses to the open-ended questions:

- The difficulties medically underserved people must face when attempting to successfully access the health insurance system (e.g. navigating the system, completing forms, scheduling appointments, and overall income barriers for the working poor).
- The effects that language barriers and the lack of translators have on access to health care.
- The role public transportation plays in accessing health care.
- Issues pertaining to legal and illegal immigrants accessing health care.

Conclusions: Our evaluation outcomes support the feasibility of an interprofessional educational model for teaching both medical and nursing students issues related to community health and that both groups of learners express favorable perceptions of an interprofessional educational experience.

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