

# Safe Moves Patient Transfers: An Interprofessional Experience with Dental & Physical Therapy Students on Supporting Patients with Mobility Limitations

Lauren Mai<sup>1</sup>; Olga S. Ensz, DMD, MPH<sup>1</sup>; Janeen Blythe, PT, DPT, ATC<sup>2</sup>; & Kim Dunleavy, PT, PhD, OCS, FNAP<sup>2</sup>

1. University of Florida College of Dentistry, Department of Community Dentistry & Behavioral Science  
2. University of Florida College of Public Health and Health Professions, Department of Physical Therapy

## BACKGROUND

## RESULTS

### Introduction

- According to the CDC, 1 in 7 adults in the United States has a disability that affects mobility.
- Older adults and individuals with special health care needs are disproportionately affected by dental disease due to barriers related to oral health care access.<sup>2</sup>
- Physical therapists (PTs) are experts in body mechanics and mobility who routinely work with geriatric patients or patients with disabilities to improve gross motor functions and capacity to perform activities of daily living. PTs serve as an excellent resource for oral health practitioners to learn to assist patients with safe transfer in and out of the dental chair.
- Dental professionals can help PTs improve their personal oral health knowledge and identify adaptive oral hygiene aids which may benefit the dental home care of patients with upper mobility limitations.
- Interprofessional education activities between students of various health disciplines provide opportunities for expanded knowledge of the roles and responsibilities of other health professions and more team-oriented approaches to patient care.<sup>3</sup>

### Specific Aims

- Assess the educational outcomes of an interprofessional activity between dental and physical therapy students on supporting patients with mobility limitations.
- Demonstrate the benefits of collaborative learning and practice in the care of patients with mobility limitations.
- Provide participants with the knowledge and skills to replicate similar interprofessional educational experiences at their academic institutions.

## METHODS

### Activity Design

- First-year dental students (N= 92) and physical therapy students (N=68) were assigned to small interprofessional groups in the dental school clinics during the Spring 2023 semester.
- Each group consisted of 3-4 dental students and 2-3 physical therapy students.
- Prior to the session, both groups of students created supplementary handouts to be explained and demonstrated during the session.

### Activity Content

- Physical therapy students demonstrated and practiced safe patient transfers with dental students through role-playing and use of mobility assistive devices in the dental clinics.
- Dental students practiced patient positioning and transfer for three case-based scenarios.
- Dental students then taught physical therapy students about oral hygiene adaptive aids and discussed the link between oral and systemic health utilizing visual handouts.

### Post Activity

- Students received immediate feedback from members of their small groups.
- Physical therapy students also received feedback from PT faculty facilitators and third-year PT student teaching assistants.
- Dental faculty provided dental students with written feedback on their handouts.
- All students completed a Qualtrics survey evaluating the activity content, their confidence level, and its impact on their skills.

Figure 1: Students' Perceptions of the Activity's Impact on their Skills and Abilities

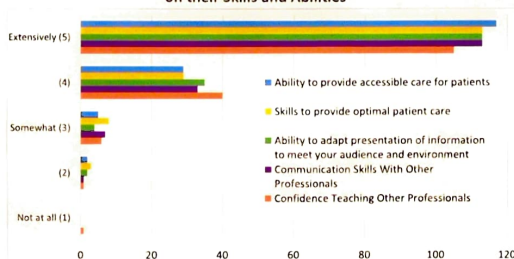


Figure 2: Student Post-Activity Confidence in Transferring Patients or Giving Oral Health Information to Clients

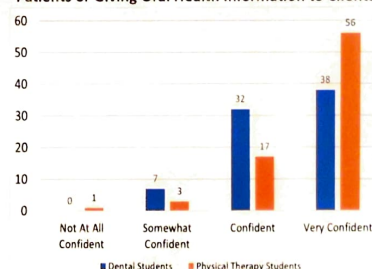


Figure 3: Activity Photo and Student-Made Handout



## CONCLUSIONS

- Interprofessional education provides valuable and effective learning experiences for students to foster team-oriented care approaches and boost confidence in interdisciplinary communication.
- Such educational initiatives also promote a comprehensive understanding of patient care, encouraging students to integrate diverse perspectives and expertise into their practice.
- Collaborative educational activities can serve to equip the future healthcare workforce with essential skills to address patient mobility challenges and enhance the oral health care of vulnerable patient populations.

## REFERENCES

- National Institutes of Health. (2021). Oral Health in America: Advances and Challenges. Retrieved from <https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/Oral-Health-in-America-Advances-and-Challenges.pdf>.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Prevalence of disabilities and health care access by disability status and type among adults - United States, 2016. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 67(32);882-87.
- Interprofessional Education Collaborative. (2016). Core competencies for interprofessional collaborative practice: 2016 update. Washington, DC: Interprofessional Education Collaborative.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- This IPE activity was developed and implemented in 2016 by Dr. Kim Dunleavy from the UF Department of Physical Therapy and Dr. Venita Sposetti from the UF College of Dentistry.
- The oral hygiene educational handout in Figure 3 was created by dental students Emma Hammer, Natasha Patel, and Thara Putthiyadam, and is shared with their permission.