

Interdisciplinary team care: Enhancing patient outcomes through collaborative healthcare.

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Introduction

Interdisciplinary team care refers to a collaborative approach to healthcare where professionals from different fields work together to provide comprehensive care for patients. This model of care emphasizes communication, shared decision-making and mutual respect among healthcare providers, each contributing their specialized knowledge to improve patient outcomes. With the increasing complexity of medical conditions and the growing demand for high-quality healthcare, interdisciplinary team care has become an essential strategy for achieving holistic, patient-centered treatment. The healthcare landscape is evolving, and many patients, especially those with chronic conditions or multiple health issues, require a range of services that span different specialties. In these cases, the traditional model of care, where a single provider manages all aspects of care, is often insufficient. An interdisciplinary team care model provides a solution by involving professionals from various disciplines such as doctors, nurses, social workers, physical therapists, dietitians, pharmacists, and psychologists who collectively assess, plan, and implement treatment strategies tailored to the patient's unique needs. One of the main advantages of interdisciplinary team care is the ability to address the physical, emotional, social, and psychological aspects of a patient's health.

Description

For instance, a patient recovering from surgery may need input from a surgeon, a physical therapist, a nutritionist, and a social worker to address not only their medical needs but also their recovery, mobility, nutrition, and home support. By collaborating, these professionals ensure that the patient's comprehensive care needs are met, ultimately leading to improved recovery times, reduced hospital readmissions, and better overall outcomes. Each member of an interdisciplinary team brings unique skills and expertise to patient care. Doctors, such as general practitioners or specialists, often lead the medical management of the patient, diagnosing conditions, prescribing treatments, and monitoring progress. Nurses play a crucial role in delivering day-to-day care, administering medications, and providing education and support to patients and their families. Pharmacists contribute their expertise in medication management, ensuring that prescriptions are appropriate, advising on drug interactions, and educating patients

about their medications. Physical therapists help patients recover mobility, strength, and function following injury or surgery, while occupational therapists focus on helping patients regain their ability to perform daily activities independently. Dietitians or nutritionists assist patients in managing dietary needs related to health conditions, such as diabetes or hypertension. Social workers help address the psychosocial needs of patients, providing support for mental health, social issues, and access to community resources. Psychologists and counsellors can address mental health concerns, offering therapy and counselling to patients dealing with anxiety, depression, or the emotional toll of their conditions. The key to effective interdisciplinary team care is open communication. Team members regularly communicate with one another to discuss patient progress, share insights, and make necessary adjustments to care plans. This collaboration ensures that all aspects of a patient's health are considered, and it promotes a more integrated approach to treatment. Interdisciplinary team care offers numerous benefits to both patients and healthcare providers. For patients, the collaborative approach leads to more comprehensive and coordinated care, which often results in improved health outcomes. Patients benefit from a holistic treatment plan that addresses the full scope of their needs, rather than just focusing on a single aspect of their condition. Additionally, the involvement of multiple specialists often leads to faster identification of issues, leading to quicker interventions and better management of complex conditions. For healthcare providers, interdisciplinary team care promotes a more efficient workflow and shared responsibility, reducing burnout and improving job satisfaction. Working together fosters a sense of camaraderie and respect among professionals, which can enhance the overall work environment. Furthermore, the shared knowledge and expertise of the team lead to better decision-making and evidence-based practices, which improves the quality of care delivered. The team-based approach also helps to address gaps in care. For example, if a primary care physician is focused on managing a patient's diabetes but is unaware of a patient's struggles with mental health, the social worker or psychologist may bring this to light. This leads to a more well-rounded approach to care, which might not have been possible with a more Siloed model. Despite its benefits, there are several challenges in implementing interdisciplinary team care. One of the primary challenges is communication. Effective communication

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between team members is crucial, yet it can be difficult when professionals have different priorities, time constraints, and methods of documentation. Miscommunication can lead to fragmented care, misunderstandings, and even medical errors. To address this, healthcare systems need to foster a culture of collaboration and invest in tools and technologies that facilitate communication, such as Electronic Health Records (EHRs) that all team members can access. Another challenge is ensuring that team members work together cohesively despite their differing roles and expertise. There may be differences in professional training, perspective, and approach, which can lead to conflicts or inefficiencies. Addressing these challenges requires clear roles, mutual respect, and regular team meetings to align goals and clarify expectations.

Conclusion

Interdisciplinary team care represents a vital shift in healthcare, providing a more comprehensive, collaborative approach to patient treatment. By leveraging the expertise of a diverse range of healthcare professionals, this model improves patient outcomes, enhances care coordination, and fosters a holistic approach to healthcare. While challenges such as communication and role alignment exist, these can be addressed with proper planning, training, and organizational support. As the healthcare system continues to evolve and care becomes more complex, interdisciplinary team care will be an essential strategy for improving quality, efficiency, and patient satisfaction. By working together, healthcare providers can ensure that patients receive the best possible care across all aspects of their health.

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