IFMSA POLICY STATEMENT

Multidisciplinary approach to healthcare

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Summary
The International Federation of Medical Students’ Associations (IFMSA) strongly believes that healthcare must be patient centered and multidisciplinary. To achieve that healthcare professionals must have appropriate knowledge, good communication skills, be team players and have an empathic approach. Their education must be practical, multidisciplinary and state of the art.

Introduction
The education and training of dentists, doctors, midwives, nurses, pharmacists and other health-care professionals has long been the foundation of safe, high quality healthcare.

Multidisciplinary care is an integrated team approach to healthcare. The evaluation of treatment options and treatment planning are collaborative processes involving medical and allied healthcare professionals in consultation with the patient and the patient’s family. Individual, patient-specific treatment plans are developed, and delivery of care becomes a shared responsibility.[1][2]

Studies have shown positive effects from using a multidisciplinary, integrated, whole person, team advocate approach to educate and empower patients with multiple chronic illnesses. The results indicated that the participants’ perceptions of physical functioning, physical well-being, control, self-efficacy and life satisfaction increased. The patients rated their health care services in the program as more effective than previous health care services. [3]

Daily rounds by a multidisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals are associated with lower mortality among patients in the intensive care unit (ICU), according to a report in the February 22 issue of the Archives of Internal Medicine. A second report finds that surgical patients are increasingly being managed jointly by a surgeon and a hospitalist or other clinician.[4]
Patient Care and Patient Safety
Good patient care takes into consideration the individual needs of the patient. There needs to be effective communication within the healthcare professions and with the patients themselves.

IFMSA considers the STEEP principles described by the Institute of Medicine in “Crossing the Quality Chasm: A New Health System for the 21st Century” as an appropriate model for the delivery of excellent patient care. The STEEP principles are Safe, Timely, Efficient, Effective, Equitable, and Patient-centered.[5]

We also recognize the importance of a multi disciplinary approach in this topic. As the WHO Multi-professional Patient Safety Curriculum Guide mentions: “The education and training of dentists, doctors, midwives, nurses, pharmacists and other health-care professionals has long been the foundation of safe, high quality health care. Yet, it has been under-used and under-valued as a vital tool for addressing the challenges of achieving improved patient safety. It is clear that a new approach is needed if education and training are to play the full role that they should in improving patient safety.”[6]

One health as an example
The One Health concept, also known as One Medicine, is a worldwide strategy for expanding interdisciplinary collaborations and communications in all aspects of health care for humans, animals and the environment. It helps us to enhance Public Health, expand the scientific knowledge base and improve medical education and clinical care. Worldwide, nearly 75% of all emerging human infectious diseases in the past three decades were originated in animals. Environmental health may affect human and animal health through contamination and pollution. To provide adequate healthcare, food and water for the growing global population (estimated to grow from 7 billion in 2011 to 9 billion in 2050), the health care professions and their related disciplines and institutions must work together. Collaborations will beneficially impact the health of both people and animals, for example in the fields of research and infection control.[7][8]

IFMSA’s Stance
IFMSA supports a multidisciplinary approach to Health Care. To support this statement we call for stakeholders to work on the implementation of the following topics:

- Healthcare professionals’ knowledge should at all times be relevant, up-to-date and evidence based.
- Healthcare professionals need good communication skills in order to be a team player in a multidisciplinary environment.
- A priority for all healthcare professionals is to be patient focused which requires an interactive and empathic approach.
- Healthcare education should be practical with maximum exposure to clinical settings from the beginning of the curricula.
It should be interactive with a variety of teaching methods for example problem based learning.

Healthcare education should mirror the multidisciplinary working of healthcare teams which includes learning together in order to gain an understanding of other professions.

Healthcare education should be state of the art. It should include the latest evidence-based practice and be delivered according to the latest developments in education.

We believe health can be improved through joint educational efforts between medical schools and related studies, schools of public health and environment, joint efforts via health networks and conferences and joint efforts in clinical care for better treatment and prevention.

Patients should be educated, so that they can be involved in their care discussions and management and should receive timely and appropriate information from the healthcare professionals. [9]

Institutional culture must support collaboration, including endorsement and leadership from heads of organizations. Achievements such as accreditations must be recognized among disciplines.[10]

2. Healthcare professionals must have appropriate knowledge, good communication skills, be team players and have an empathic approach.

3. In order to achieve all the above, a motivational learning environment must be created where members of the healthcare team are working together as team-workers from the very beginning of their careers.

References


[5] Institute of Medicine, March 2001


