

INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION

CNA POSITION

The Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) believes that the people of Canada are entitled to a health system with the capacity to help them meet both their physical and their mental health needs – whether those needs are illness prevention, early detection, treatment, rehabilitation or recovery. Further, the association believes that the responsiveness of the health system can be strengthened through effective collaboration among health professionals.

CNA believes that respecting the following six principles, as outlined in *The Principles and Framework for Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care*,¹ will facilitate collaboration among professions and professionals:

1. Focus on the Patient/Client

The needs of individual patients and clients must be the focus of health services. Health professionals work together to optimize the health and wellness of each individual and involve the individual in decision-making about his/her health. Individuals and their families are actively engaged in the prevention, promotion and management of health problems. Health professionals respect that personal health information must be kept confidential.

2. Population Health Approach

Using assessments of the demographics and health status of a community will ensure the relevance of health services, including the identification of appropriate health professions. Trends in the health of the population are tracked to assess the impact of the services offered.

3. Quality Care and Services

Health professionals work together to identify and assess research evidence as a basis for identifying treatment and management of health problems. Health outcomes are continuously evaluated to track the effectiveness and appropriateness of services.

4. Access

The right service is provided at the right time, in the right place and by the right care provider. Geographic barriers are minimized. Service delivery is respectful of age, gender, culture, language, religion and lifestyle of patients/clients.

5. Trust and Respect

Each profession brings its own set of knowledge and skills – the result of education, training and experience – to collaborative health services. Each professional contributes to an individual's health. Shared decision-making, creativity and innovation allow providers to learn from each other and enhance the effectiveness of their collaborative efforts.

6. Communication

Active listening and effective communication skills facilitate both information sharing and decision-making.

¹ (Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care [EICP], 2005)



To support and sustain interprofessional collaboration, CNA believes that eight structural elements² must also be present:

1. The planning, recruitment, education and workplace to support human resources
2. Long-term funding allocations that support the necessary infrastructure and information technology requirements of interprofessional collaboration
3. Liability insurance framework for interprofessional teams
4. Regulatory framework that recognizes the decision-making processes and roles within interprofessional collaboration
5. Information technology and infrastructure
6. Standards that guarantee both inter-operability and access by appropriate professionals to electronic health records
7. Governance and management structures
8. Planning and evaluation frameworks and assessment tools to measure the performance of interdisciplinary collaborative practices that are supported by ongoing research and surveillance.

BACKGROUND

As a partner in the Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration Project, CNA contributed to the development of *The Principles and Framework for Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Primary Health Care*, which describes the effectiveness of service integration to the health of Canadians:

The range and complexity of factors that influence health and well-being, as well as disease and illness, require health professionals from diverse health professions to work together in a comprehensive manner. For example, individuals need health information, diagnosis of health problems, support for behavioural change, immunization, screening for disease prevention and monitoring of management plans for chronic health problems. Working together, the combined knowledge and skills of health professionals become a powerful mechanism to enhance the health of the population served.

Working together can take various forms. At the simplest level, health professionals consult their patients/clients and, when appropriate, each other about the services needed by their patients/clients. In more complex situations, health professionals work more closely, identifying (together with patients/clients) what services are needed, who will provide them and what adjustments need to be made to the health management plan. The number and type of service health professionals depend on the nature of the health issue and the availability of resources. This is a dynamic process that responds to changing needs.³

Canada has a history of effective interprofessional collaboration in community health centres, and chronic disease management teams have been in operation for many years in regions across Canada. Research on the experiences of these sites as well as consultation with providers has identified the barriers and enablers to interprofessional collaboration.

Approved by the CNA Board of Directors, November 2005

² (EICP, 2005)

³ (EICP, 2005)

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