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BY COURTNEY E. VANNAH

Interprofessional Paving the Way Patient-Centered

During the 2015-2016 academic school year at the University of New England (UNE), an interprofessional student team began providing in-service trainings for long-term care facility nursing staff. The inaugural team, led by Regina Arey, a dental hygiene student, included occupational therapy and pharmacy students. The start-up of this project was generously funded by the UNE Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) student mini-grant program.

The UNE IPEC was established formally in 2010. As part of IPEC, students representing a full range of health professions come



SPECIAL FEATURE

Interprofession
continued

tal hygiene students, the pharmacy students learned why reduced salivary production is so detrimental to oral health. During the preparation for this presentation, the interprofessional team learned an extraordinary amount not only about each other's professional perspective, but also about the key pieces required to paint a more complete picture of an issue while viewing it from a holistic, patient-centered perspective. Witnessing their conversation was like watching mini-light-bulbs lighting up over their heads!

In January 2016, the interprofessional team travelled to the first long-term care facility to share their presentation. They worked around the shift change schedule and, in total, provided six hours of education to reach nearly all of the long-term care nursing team. The team discussed identification of oral diseases, proper oral hygiene methods, caries prevention, adaptation of the oral hygiene routine for the geriatric patient and oral-related side effects of common medications.

The topics covered were, of course, quite common to any in-service training in a long-term care facility, but their reception was pure magic. Health professionals including oral health professionals, dentists, and dental hygienists

professional team present on oral health was incredible. It is one thing to see a medication-induced xerostomia presentation by a dental hygienist, but to hear it from a pharmacist seemed to captivate the audience.

Something extraordinary happened when the audience realized it was an oral health professional speaking about oral health for the first time. The occupational therapist, the pharmacist, and the dental hygienist to discuss an oral health presentation with members of another health profession. It was like all the barriers in the room were gone. I could almost see the faces of the audience. The team read, "If the occupational therapist and the pharmacists are this passionate about oral health, maybe I should be as well." It likely wasn't the first time for many in the room, but they were truly hearing it. I observed an audience that I've never seen in an oral health training.

Before Arey graduated, she was coming students to take oral health so passionately started. She wanted to create this program and to create this program a



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