The Virtual Interprofessional Education (VIPE) Symposium

The Yale School of Medicine Physician Assistant Online Program is a virtual program, with students located across the United States. So, how does a student alone in rural Montana learn what a social worker or speech therapist in NYC or Los Angeles does? To improve the PA student’s understanding of the roles of different providers, Mary Showstark helped create the Virtual Interprofessional Education (VIPE) Symposium. Using funding from a Macy Foundation Grant, Ms. Showstark invited online and ground campus institutions to collaborate in a virtual IPE in an effort to bring students from different professions together. The committee includes members from the following universities: New York University (NYU) Communicative Sciences and Disorders, NYU Occupational Therapy, University of Southern California (USC) Physical Therapy, USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work, Georgetown Nurse Practitioner, George Washington Milken Institute School of Public Health, Concordia University departments of Child Life, Nursing and Justice and Public Policy and A.T. Still University of Health Sciences. They have hosted two successful VIPEs in November of 2018 and 2019, with the next scheduled for November 2020.

Starting in November 2017, the VIPE committee met monthly, face-to-face via Zoom. They utilized a collaborative document and created asynchronous learning material for the students to place on their respective learning management systems which included a case study, roles and responsibilities of the different professions, video interviews of the various professions and a video case with actors playing the patient and family members. All this content was provided to the students to review prior to attending the VIPE symposium, using the online learning platforms of 2U, Blackboard or Canvas. Committee members also worked together to obtain IRB approval at each of the respective universities to survey the students on their pre and post knowledge about the roles and responsibilities of professions as well as their knowledge and prior experience in IPE. Two validated scales, known as the Interprofessional Attitudes Scale (IPAS) and the Interprofessional Collaborative Competencies Attainment Survey (ICCAS), were used.

On the day of the each symposium, approximately 180 students from 6 universities and 10 different professional programs met using Zoom, first gathering in one large Zoom room for an introduction, then breaking out into facilitated smaller multidisciplinary groups. This allowed the students to interact with each other, learn each other’s roles, review the case, and to make medical and social suggestions for the care for the patient. The facilitator’s role is to help when the conversation slows and ask students probing questions. Facilitators are provided with a guide to assist with the problem-based learning and with suggested questions. After one hour discussing the case, everyone reconvenes into the large Zoom room again to present their small-group findings to all participants. The entire VIPE is 2.5 hours.

The 2019 case centered around physical and emotional abuse: the case study patient was a newly turned 18-year-old female, assigned male at birth (AMAB) (Pronouns: she/her/hers) who was still living at home with her mother and mother’s boyfriend. The mother’s boyfriend was abusing her. Due to these circumstances the patient was losing weight and not eating appropriately. The 2020 case is about a child with autism. The committee works diligently to make sure each of the individual professions will have representation and input for the case.

Overall, evaluations have shown significant improvement in student knowledge, and students have given positive, subjective feedback on their VIPE experience.

Yale GIM Newsletter, January 2020
The VIPE committee has presented its strategies and experiences at Collaborating Across Borders, AfriPen in Nairobi, and the International Association of Physician Assistant Educators in Switzerland, and will present in February 2020 at the International Association of Medical Science Educators (IAMSE) in Malaysia. The committee is also working to create IPE symposiums across five countries in Africa in 2020, which will be the first-ever, cross continent Afri-VIPE. In addition, Ms. Showstark has been asked to join the team which is helping to rewrite the guidelines for the WHO on Interprofessional Education, further widening the reach of VIPE.