



The study of the need for interprofessional collaboration in the health care system in Poland - experience of Lesław A. Paga Foundation

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Abstract

Background: Interprofessional collaboration (IC) in healthcare is a process by which professionals from different disciplines collaborate to provide an integrated and cohesive approach to patient care. The Lesław A. Paga Foundation for many years supports the idea of cooperation between professional, promoting it among representatives of public and social life in Poland and Eastern Europe. The foundation's project dedicated to health care is Healthcare Leaders. Thanks to the program, participants of Healthcare Leaders have a chance to experience IC under the conditions of Polish healthcare system.

Methods: A self-administered, anonymous questionnaire was distributed to 90 participants of The Healthcare Leaders project in November 2015. Comparisons were performed using e.g. chi-square tests and descriptive statistics. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 20.0.

Results: The response rate was 42,2%. More than 80% of respondents are familiar with the concept of interprofessional collaboration in healthcare system. 36 respondents (94,7%) also agree that IC among healthcare practitioners may help to generate financial savings in the Polish healthcare system. Accordingly 34 respondents to implement IC to the healthcare system necessary is mutual respect (89,5%). This point of view is shared mainly by the people who has medical or pharmaceutical professional education ($p < 0,05$).

Conclusion: IC is well-known phenomena among participants of Healthcare Leader Program. Further research should be considered as necessary and useful.

Introduction

Interprofessional collaboration (IC) in healthcare is a process by which professionals from different disciplines collaborate to provide an integrated and cohesive approach to patient care^[1]. Implementing IC into healthcare system is necessary to develop a successful response to patients' needs^[2]. From the patients' and professionals' perspective, IC provides great potential for attaining positive patient outcomes and higher job satisfaction. Research suggests that graduates are aware of the importance of communication, teamwork, and patient-centered care and felt a better understanding of the roles of other health professionals in the modern environment^[3].

Among many important conditions crucial to implementation of the IC to practice, should be distinguished communication skills. Interprofessional communication skills are significant to build collaborative relationships within professionals, integrate healthcare teams and meet the requirements of health care reforms^[4]. It is worth noting that this cooperation should be based on respect for the autonomy of the different professions and mutual respect^[5].

The Lesław A. Paga Foundation supports for many years the idea of cooperation between professional, promoting it among representatives of public and social life in Poland and Eastern Europe. The Foundation since 2003 have been delivering plenty of educational projects directed to students and graduates of higher schools, as well as to students and teachers of secondary schools from Poland and Europe. The Foundation organizes especially for them closed evening meetings with the greatest experts of the Polish economy, industrial and public issues. Foundation is also to promote the highest ethical standards and the organizational culture among the entrepreneurs. Apart from regular projects (e.g. Healthcare Leaders), Foundation organizes conferences, workshops and lectures whose speakers are the best specialists of the Polish experts. Currently the Lesław A. Paga Foundation is well known and recognizable institution which successfully promotes young generation in East Europe^[6].

The Healthcare Leaders is one of the Lesław A. Paga Foundation project especially dedicated to students and graduates of management, economy, finance, pharmacy, public health, law and another field of study who wants to pursue career in the healthcare sector. The program is also directed towards specialists of sectors which may constitute a transfer of knowledge and technology related to healthcare. The project consists of trainings led by specialists and experts from the health care, pharmaceutical and high tech sectors. The participants obtain practical knowledge about functioning of the public and private health service, prepare case studies, and discuss the necessary changes in the sector^[6].

The process of candidates' selection is public, transparent and multi-step. In the first stage, candidates complete a questionnaire placed on the project website. The Expert Commission appointed by the Foundation evaluates applications and invites approximately 70 people to interview. The aim of the interview is to check the level of soft skills as well as ability to conduct proper discussion by future leaders. The last step is to complete the test which checks whether the candidates are aware of the current situation in the healthcare system in Poland. Selected individuals are determined to change the health care system in Poland. Since 2013, three editions of programs have been organizing, included more than 90 participants^[6].

Materials and methods

A self-administered, anonymous questionnaire was distributed to 90 participants of The Healthcare Leaders project in November 2015. The survey was conducted electronically via social media. The response rate was 42,2% (38 respondents among 90 laureate of Healthcare Leaders). Participants who returned incomplete questionnaires were considered as non-responders. All participants were informed about the study's anonymity and purpose of the research.

The questionnaire was in Polish. Face and content validity, reliability, applicability and practicality of the questionnaires were tested by 10 participants (results not included in the final research). The questionnaire, which consisted of 8 questions, was divided into two parts. The first part of the questionnaire included 7 questions regarding interprofessional collaboration in the healthcare system. The second one (1 question) is strictly associated with demographic information e.g. gender, level of education, current workplace etc. The Likert Scale and modifications were used. Only non-projective

questions were used. Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS statistical software, version 20 (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA). Relationships between variables were examined using Fisher's exact test and χ^2 test. A P-value of ≤ 0.05 indicated statistical significance. In the analysis were also applied methods of descriptive statistics.

Results

Characteristics of surveyed group

During the research was collected opinion of 38 respondents among 90 laureates of Healthcare Leaders program. More than half of respondents are woman (52,6%). Also more than half of respondents declare obtaining degree in medical or pharmaceutical science (52,6%). However still 14 respondents have a current status of student (36,8%). The same number of respondents declare the main workplace associated with university and private company (not corporation) - both 10 respondents. The precise characteristic of respondents is contained in [Table 1](#).

Characteristics of surveyed group	N (in %)
Woman	20 (52,6)
Man	18 (48,4)
Medical, pharmaceutical education	20 (52,6)
Economic education	4 (10,5)
Law education	10 (26,3)
Current place of employment: university	10 (26,3)
Current place of employment: corporation	4 (10,5)
Current place of employment: a private company, not corporations	10 (26,3)
Current place of employment: government agencies	8 (21,0)
Current status: student	14 (36,8)

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents (the respondents may provide more than one answer)

Selected question	n (in %)				
	Definitely yes	Rather yes	I have no opinion	Probably not	Definitely no
Do you know the concept of "Interprofessional collaboration in healthcare"?	10 (26,3)	22 (57,9)	0	6 (15,8)	0
Do you agree that IC among healthcare practitioners may contribute to improving the quality of patient care in the Polish healthcare system?	38 (100,0)	0	0	0	0
Do you agree that IC among healthcare practitioners may help to generate financial savings in the Polish healthcare system?	26 (68,4)	10 (26,3)	2 (5,3)	0	0
Do you think that the program Healthcare Leaders contributes to popularize the idea of IC in the health sector?	30 (78,9)	8 (21,9)	0	0	0

Table 2. Results of responses for selected questions

More than 80% of respondents are familiar with the concept of interprofessional collaboration in healthcare system (definitely yes, rather yes answers - 84,3%; see [Table 2](#)).

Each of respondents agrees that IC among healthcare practitioners may contribute to improving the quality of patient care in the Polish healthcare system. 36 respondents also agree that IC among healthcare practitioners may help to generate financial savings in the Polish healthcare system. In the opinion of respondents Healthcare Leaders contributes to popularize the idea of interprofessional collaboration in the health sector. More information is attached in [Table 2](#).

The most important think to promote IC is increase the level of soft skills e.g. communication, active listening abilities and assertive attitude. 36 respondents emphasized that communication skills is crucial to make cooperation between representatives of the medical profession effective ([Table 3](#)). As it was mentioned in the introduction cooperation should be based on respect for the autonomy of the different professions and mutual respect. Accordingly 34 respondents in providing IC to the healthcare system necessary is mutual respect (89,5%). This point of view is shared mainly by the people who has medical or pharmaceutical professional education ($p<0,05$). The ability to work under time pressure is indicated mostly by the economist and lawyer ($p<0,05$). Other analyzed factors did not differentiate the respondents to a statistically significant extent in terms ($p<0,05$).

	n (in %)
Communication skills	36 (94,7)
Empathy	8 (21,1)
Responsibility	26 (68,4)
The ability to resolve conflicts	22 (57,9)
The ability to work under time pressure	12 (31,6)
The mutual respect	34 (89,5)

Table 3. What skills and qualities are necessary to make cooperation between representatives of the medical profession effective? (The respondents may provide more than one answer)

Discussion

Although experts' foundations are active in media statements, this article is the first scientific publication of this rank associated with the Healthcare Leaders program. Alongside the scientific value, article also promotion of foundation activities. Due to the specific of the Healthcare Leaders program, collecting the opinion of people who may in the future play an important role in the health care system in Poland ought to be considered as useful.

The limitation of the research is a small study group. A small group prevents application more sophisticated statistical tools. The conducted analysis should be considered semi-quantitatively. However, the study may be introduction for qualitative research e.g. participant observation or interviews. The qualitative method has a strong basis in the field of psychology to understand social connections and problems, and is popular among political science, social work, and education research^[7].

Poland's health care is based on a general health insurance system. People, who are covered by the national health insurance system, and their dependents, are entitled to free primary health care, specialist out-patient care, hospital treatment, dental treatment and ambulance transport. Public expenditure on health care is among the lowest in Europe. Poles have one of the worst access to the most innovative drugs, have one of the highest mortality rates from cancer and one of the longest waiting times for an appointment with a doctor or treatment at a hospital^[8]. In the opinion of the respondents the IC may improve the financial situation of the health care system.

In the opinion of respondents, the most important think to promote IC is increase the level of soft skills e.g. communication, active listening abilities and assertive attitude. One of the study indicated that in everyday practice, both nurses and physicians should acknowledge the importance of effective communication. It should be implemented interprofessional teamwork interventions to improve collaboration. In addition research also indicated that factors that improve physicians' attitudes toward collaboration and effective communication should be further explored^[9].

Conclusion

Interprofessional collaboration is well-known phenomena among participants of Healthcare Leaders program. According to the Healthcare Leaders participant implementing IC to polish healthcare system may be effective solution, especially in the current difficult financial situation. Further research in this area should be conducted. In the future necessary is to create a model of collaboration adjusted to polish conditions. ■

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Conflicts of interest

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