

The Fir Square Doula Support Program

Objective

The Collaboration for Maternal and Newborn Health established *The Fir Square Doula Support Program* to provide an interprofessional learning model for students, enhance student awareness of the broad range of issues related to pregnancy and substance use, develop knowledge about labour support, and promote collaborative decision-making and problem-solving.

Project Approach

1. Students from medicine, midwifery and nursing are selected to participate in the program which runs the course of their academic year
2. Students receive Doula training to provide labour support to women who are part of a harm-reduction program at BC Women's Hospital
3. Students meet weekly with their facilitator, to hear presentations from community organizations that represent resources for marginalized women, such as housing, substance misuse, sex-trade work and incarceration
4. Students evaluate their experiences several times throughout the year

Results

Students gain a comprehensive appreciation for both the health care needs of a pregnant woman who is marginalized, and the interprofessional approach to patient-centred care. They enjoy working alongside students from other disciplines, learning about their professional skills, values and scope of practice. Students report that the opportunity to engage in an interprofessional setting increases their interest in practicing maternity care.

"This project has been a phenomenal enrichment to my first year of midwifery. The opportunity to develop interprofessional relationships has been extremely beneficial, and I feel that each of us will practice more respectfully and more cohesively as part of a team, as a result of this project."

Conclusion

Two separate groups of students have completed the program over the past two years. We are currently enrolling students for the upcoming year and will be submitting a manuscript for publication of our evaluation summary. The experience of collaboration has been rewarding for the students involved as well as for the project leaders who represent childbirth educators, doulas, family physicians, midwives and nurses.

Resources

For more information, please visit
<http://www.cmnh.ca>