

# Creating an Interprofessional Learning Environment through Communities of Practice: An Alternative to Traditional Preceptorship

## Objective

The Collaboration in Clinical Settings Project has two primary objectives:

1. To support interprofessional (IP) collaboration at clinical sites by cultivating communities of practice. A community of practice is a group of people who regularly share and learn together, based on a shared interest.
2. To enhance students' IP education by replacing traditional student clinical placements with IP mentoring.

## Project Approach

1. Facilitators worked with seven clinical sites to help them develop communities of practice that focused on interprofessional collaboration and mentoring of students.
2. Participants at the clinical sites came together to work on issues such as communication within their teams and admissions procedures.
3. Students doing their placements at clinical sites worked with professionals and students from other disciplines to learn about other professionals' roles and skill sets.
4. Participants were interviewed after six months to examine the changes that took place at their sites.

*"With my student and I, it sparked a good discussion about peoples' roles in the workplace, and how to manage that communication back and forth better. We spent quite a while talking about that and the fact that when things go wrong, it's often because there's a lack of understanding of the other guy's job and if you had some idea of what they were going through to try and streamline things together, how all the pieces fit, you'd have a more cohesive workplace."*

– Nurse preceptor

## Results

Participants at the various sites worked together to enhance their practice. The improvements were around either better communications or streamlining of patients' admission and discharge processes. Communities implemented initiatives such as joint meetings among all professionals in a unit and the designation of one person to do patient intakes. Students at these sites gained insight into their own roles and the roles of other professionals.

## Conclusion

The changes participants made in their communities of practice, and the involvement of students, contributed to enhanced patient-centred practice. Because of their collaborative work, there were positive impacts on relationships among professionals, patient care, integration of work processes, and work environments.

## Resources

[www.interprofessionalalberta.ca](http://www.interprofessionalalberta.ca)  
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