

Interprofessional Collaboration on a Ward of Internal Medicine: a Qualitative Study of Role Perceptions among Nurses and Doctors

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INTRODUCTION: Studies have shown that interprofessional collaboration between doctors and nurses contributes to the quality of teamwork, a necessary condition for optimal patient care. In order for team members to collaborate effectively, they must share a common perception of each team member's role. One of the aims of our study was to describe and compare doctors' and nurses' perceptions and expectations of each other's roles, in general and in situations of interprofessional collaboration.

METHODS: Study participants included volunteer residents (16) and staff nurses (16) of the General Internal Medicine division at the University Hospitals of Geneva. We carried out individual interviews to determine participants' perceptions of doctors' and nurses' professional roles, both in general and in specific urgent and non-urgent clinical paper cases. Additionally, a written questionnaire was administered to the same respondents, which explored their perceptions of doctors' and nurses' roles in 10 additional clinical vignettes. Transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. Seven researchers independently read 5 interviews, identifying key themes and issues. These were then compared and discussed, and a consensus list of initial codes was developed. Subsequent interviews were then coded independently by 3 researchers (VJ, SC, and MN), and coding was reviewed by the larger group in order to address any discrepancies.

RESULTS: At the time of the abstract submission, the analyses were still ongoing but preliminary results suggest differences in nurses' and doctors' perceptions and expectations of each other's roles. Such differences may influence the quality of their collaboration and thus affect patient management and safety. The next stage of our analysis will compare participants' role perceptions with their actual performance in high-fidelity simulation of urgent and non-urgent clinical situations.

CONCLUSION: Preliminary results from our study suggest that doctors and nurses may understand and conceptualize each other's roles differently. Hence they may lack shared notions of interprofessional collaboration. Interprofessional training initiatives may be one approach to fostering such a shared vision and understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, and thereby contribute to improved patient-centered care and patient safety.