

ANNOUNCEMENT

World Health Organization Study Group on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice

JEAN YAN, RN, PHD¹, JOHN H. V. GILBERT, PHD², & STEVEN J. HOFFMAN, BHSC³

¹*Co-Chair, WHO Study Group on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice and Chief Scientist for Nursing & Midwifery, Department of Human Resources for Health, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland,* ²*Co-Chair, WHO Study Group on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice; Principal and Professor Emeritus, College of Health Disciplines, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada; Project Lead, Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaborative,* ³*Project Manager, WHO Study Group on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice, Department of Human Resources for Health, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland*

The urgency for action to enhance human resources for health internationally was recently highlighted by the *World Health Report 2006: Working Together for Health* which revealed an estimated worldwide shortage of almost 4.3 million doctors, midwives, nurses and support workers.¹ The 59th World Health Assembly recognized this crisis and adopted a resolution in 2006 calling for a rapid scaling-up of health workforce production through various strategies including the use of “innovative approaches to teaching in industrialized and developing countries”.²

As one innovative strategy to help tackle the global health workforce challenge, we are pleased to announce the launch of the World Health Organization (WHO) Study Group on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice. Working in collaboration with the International Association for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice (InterEd), this initiative builds upon the considerable progress that has been achieved in this area since WHO first identified interprofessional education as an important component of primary health care in 1978³ and issued its technical report on this subject in 1988.⁴ Not only will the WHO Study Group conduct a much-needed international environment scan and an assessment of the current state of research in this area, but it will also identify, evaluate and synthesize the evidence on potential facilitators, incentives and levers for action that could be adopted as part of a global strategy for interprofessional education and collaborative practice (Exhibit 1). This work will form the basis for follow-up efforts and ensure that future activities are rooted in the best evidence possible.

The WHO Study Group consists of 25 top education, practice and policy experts from across every region of the world; members have formed three separate teams on

 Exhibit 1. Tasks of the WHO Study Group on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice.

- Review the 1988 report of the WHO Study Group on Multiprofessional Education of Health Personnel (WHO, 1988)⁴ and evaluate the positive outcomes of this report as well as the areas in which little or no progress has been made;
 - Assess the current state of research evidence on interprofessional education and collaborative practice, synthesize it within an international context, and identify the gaps that must still be addressed;
 - Conduct an international environmental scan to determine the current uptake of interprofessional education and collaborative practice, discover examples that illuminate successes, barriers, and enabling factors, and identify the best practices currently known in this area;
 - Develop a conceptual framework that would identify the key issues that must be considered and addressed by WHO and its partners when formulating a global operational plan for interprofessional education and collaborative practice;
 - Identify, evaluate and synthesize evidence on the potential facilitators, incentives and levers for action that could be recommended as part of a global strategy for interprofessional education and collaborative practice; and
 - Evaluate the efforts and contributions of this WHO Study Group.
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 Exhibit 2. Partnering organizations.

1. Australasian Inter Professional Practice and Education Network (AIPPEN);
 2. Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaboration (CIHC);
 3. European Interprofessional Education Network (EIPEN);
 4. *Journal of Interprofessional Care* (JIC);
 5. National Health Sciences Students' Association in Canada (NaHSSA);
 6. The Network: Towards Unity for Health;
 7. Nordic Interprofessional Network (NIPNET); and
 8. UK Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education (CAIPE)
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interprofessional education, collaborative practice, and system-level supportive structures that are led by Prof Peter G. Baker (University of Queensland, Australia), Prof Yuichi Ishikawa (Kobe University, Japan) and Prof Dame Jill Macleod Clark (University of Southampton, UK) respectively. The WHO Study Group has also established partnerships with several existing communities of experts and enthusiasts (Exhibit 2) to further engage the wider community in this historic initiative while maximizing the specialized knowledge and local experiences of individuals worldwide.

It is clear that now is an exciting time of progress for interprofessional education and collaborative practice. Working together for better health is more important than ever, and we look forward to updating you as the WHO Study Group and its partners move towards a greater understanding of this important issue.

References

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- [4] World Health Organization (1988). Learning Together to Work Together for Health. Report of a WHO Study Group on Multiprofessional Education for Health Personnel: The Team Approach. *Technical Report Series 769:1–72*. Geneva: World Health Organization.