



## **Inter-professional Collaboration as a Cornerstone of Healthcare: A Review**

**Bamigboye, T. L.<sup>1\*</sup>, Taiwo, O. A.<sup>2</sup>, Adegoke, J. I.<sup>3</sup>, & Adeleke, E. A<sup>1</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Nursing Science, Fountain University, Osogbo, Osun State, Nigeria.*

<sup>2</sup>*Department of Nursing Science, Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria.*

<sup>3</sup>*Department of Nursing Science, Osun State University, Osogbo, Osun State Nigeria.*

*\*Corresponding author: [lilliantoluwalope@gmail.com](mailto:lilliantoluwalope@gmail.com); [jaido\\_olujide@yahoo.com](mailto:jaido_olujide@yahoo.com); [juliet.adepoke@uniosun.edu.ng](mailto:juliet.adepoke@uniosun.edu.ng); [eadeleke2000@gmail.com](mailto:eadeleke2000@gmail.com)*

### **Abstract**

**Background:** The word "collaboration" is utilised in all facets of health care, including clinical practice, education, and research. Inter-professional collaboration involves shared responsibility and interdependence within a team that shares mutual respect, dedication, and common goals. The healthcare workforce of any nation is regarded as an essential component of the country's functioning health system, where team collaboration can improve patient outcomes. If inter-professional rivalry and conflict exist among health workers, especially in Nigeria, it can result in poor health delivery to the population. **Objectives:** The aim of this study was to identify the importance of inter-professional collaboration, the essentially required competencies, and the factors that could contribute to and hinder effective collaboration for general consideration and amendments to foster the necessary collaboration as enshrined in the sustainable development goal (SDG) 17 of the United Nations **Methodology:** This paper reviewed previous studies on the same or similar topics using the topic to this study to gather the relevant information. **Conclusion/Recommendations:** Evident rivalry affects intra- and inter-sectoral patient-care collaboration, with recently witnessed and increased complexity in the healthcare sector; a diverse workforce's cooperation—including physicians, nurses, social workers, and other healthcare professionals—is required to reduce this. Various health professionals must practise inter-professional collaboration in the healthcare industry to provide high-quality care to patients, families, and caregivers.

**Keywords:** Healthcare system, Patient-care, partnership (SDG 17), Teamwork

### **Introduction**

According to Frenk et al. (2022), challenges within healthcare systems have drastically changed over the last decades as patient care has become more complex. The increasing rates of comorbidity among patients and the complexity of care have warranted inter-professional collaboration (IPC) as a critical component of the healthcare structure (Ansa et al., 2020). An IPC is a cornerstone of today's healthcare organisations; it is intended to address fragmentation in healthcare systems and increasingly address complex healthcare needs that exceed one professional's expertise. Clinicians from different fields must work with patients, their

families, carers, and communities to provide comprehensive services and quality care (Fox et al., 2019). Collaboration is a term used in all areas of health care, such as research, education, and clinical practice (Vaseghi et al., 2022). The story of patient care is no longer limited to the knowledge of a particular profession as the healthcare community experiences unavoidable changes. Instead, an IPC allows people to harmonise their skills, creating a symphony of care for the best outcome. This collaborative approach is more than just a theory; it is the thread that holds these medical professionals together as they work to deliver comprehensive, patient-centred care. Everyone knows that they

cannot handle healthcare issues on their own and that collaborating with other healthcare professionals is crucial due to the complexity of the field. Inter-professional collaboration is therefore characterised by interdependence and shared accountability within a team with common goals, collaborative commitment, and mutual respect (Khalili & Orchard, 2020). It is one of the principles necessary to improve healthcare practitioners' performance (Vaseghi et al., 2022). Effective cross-disciplinary collaboration among healthcare professionals is one strategy to improve the effectiveness of the healthcare system while making the most of the available resources. Interprofessional collaboration can expedite the goal-achieving process within the healthcare system (Vaseghi et al., 2022).

### **Materials and methods**

The review was done by gathering information from previously conducted reviews and studies. The significant materials and methods used were literature reviews from previously conducted studies.

### **Essential preconditions for inter-professional collaboration**

According to Kauff et al. (2021), developing an inclusive social identity, accepting diversity, having a common language, inter-professional abilities, and overcoming stereotypes through inter-group interactions are the fundamental prerequisites for inter-professional cooperation; these are briefed below.

#### *Inter-professional Competencies and Common Language*

Numerous academics have identified fundamental abilities for inter-professional practice, as demonstrated in a study conducted by Kauff et al. (2021). According to Claus & Wiese (2019), the fundamental competencies include handling professional roles and responsibilities, inter-professional communication, conflict behaviour, and inter-professional values and ethics. Additionally, using a common language requires effective collaboration among healthcare professionals from various disciplines (Kauff et al., 2021).

#### *Overcoming stereotypes through inter-group contact*

Inter-group contact is interactions between members of different social groups (Ramasubramanian & Costantini, 2020). Regarding the content of the stereotypes, medical doctors and midwives were perceived as more competent than podiatrists and social workers. At the same time, physiotherapists and nurses were ascribed higher practical skills than occupational therapists, doctors, audiologists, pharmacists and social workers (Kauff et al., 2021). When using contact to reduce stereotypes and prejudice between different professions, some aspects must be considered. Inter-group contact is especially effective when groups share similar status, work cooperatively on a task and have common goals in the contact situation. Therefore, interactions between workers of different health professions should be designed to enable inter-professional collaboration, leading to accomplishing shared goals (Kauff et al., 2021).

#### *Building an inclusive social identity*

According to Lutfiyya et al. (2020), an inclusive society is a society for all. It embraces diversity and a desire for equality. Inclusive societies, which are based on the principles of social justice, provide access to full participation in society for all persons and groups, irrespective of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, ability, religion, immigrant status, or socioeconomic status (Lutfiyya et al., 2020). One way to achieve an effective inter-professional collaboration is to ensure that all healthcare practitioners are socially included. The benefits of an inclusive society are multifaceted and include both social and economic advantages.

#### *Believing in diversity*

Diversity is "the practice or quality of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds as well as of different genders, sexual orientations, etc." in the Oxford English Dictionary. Diversity in the workforce and

population is inevitable, and no manager can afford to overlook it in the context of an organisation. Securing and retaining the best human resources is an ongoing goal for any organisation. People come into the organisation with distinct qualities that shape how they see the world (Ahmad et al., 2019). The idea of diversity has expanded in today's world to include strategic goals that enhance the efficacy and performance of organisations. In their study, Turi et al. (2022) concluded that age, gender, ethnicity, and experience diversity could impact workers' performance. Organisational bias results from a lack of diversity training and knowledge of diversity beliefs, particularly in developing nations with strong social and cultural ties (Turi et al., 2022). Therefore, to collaborate effectively, health professionals must recognise and accept the degree of variation surrounding each individual.

#### *Factors influencing inter-professional collaboration*

According to a study by Dahlke et al. (2020), relational, procedural, organisational, and contextual factors impact professional collaboration. Professional relationships are impacted by socialisation and professional authority, among other relational aspects. Socialisation, team procedures, relational authority, hierarchy, and team roles are also included. Processual difficulties include professionals' availability for time and place to work together. It also involves information technology, time and location, habits and rituals, urgency, complexity, and task shifting. The term "organisational issues" refers to local organisations' elements (such as resource availability) that affect professional collaboration. It also includes professional representation, fear of litigation, and organisational assistance. Finally, the contextual issues are described as more general political, social (such as ageism), and economic issues that impact professional collaboration. Cultural diversity, gender, political will, and economics are also included (Dahlke et al., 2020).

#### *Benefits of Inter-professional collaboration in hospital setting*

Inter-professional teamwork has numerous advantages essential to obtaining high work value in the healthcare sector. According to Vaseghi et al. (2022), inter-professional collaboration facilitates the resolution of current issues and expedites the accomplishment of the objectives of the healthcare system. According to Ansa et al. (2020), interprofessional collaboration fosters mutual respect among healthcare practitioners and their ability to make the best decisions for patient care.

- ❖ The IPC lowers hospitalisation and readmission rates, as well as duration and expenses (Ansa et al., 2020); this is just one of the additional advantages of inter-professional collaboration.
- ❖ Positive and effective collaboration and communication among professionals can help improve the health of staff in the workplace (Vaseghi et al., 2022).
- ❖ It also facilitates greater role clarity and enhances job satisfaction (Ansa et al., 2020).
- ❖ The healthcare system has become accountable and patient-centred (Vaseghi et al., 2022).
- ❖ It enhances patients' satisfaction by reducing medical error rates (Ansa et al., 2020).
- ❖ It causes healthcare services to be high-quality and cost-effective (Vaseghi et al., 2022).
- ❖ It facilitates the efficient use of healthcare services by improving care coordination, reducing service duplication, and promoting communication among the healthcare team (Ansa et al., 2020).
- ❖ It offers appropriate referral patterns, excellent continuity and care coordination, and better collaborative decision-making with patients (Ansa et al., 2020).
- ❖ Inter-professional collaboration increases the healthcare team's ability to understand clinical problems (Ansa et al., 2020).

### Challenges to Inter-professional Collaborations

According to Ansa et al. (2020), inter-professional collaboration presents unique challenges that can become communication barriers. Some of these challenges are differing routines of the professionals, different knowledge and identities, professional hierarchies, time constraints, ineffective communication, power imbalance and distinct professional domains (Ansa et al., 2020).

### Conclusion and recommendations

The review indicated that the cornerstone of modern healthcare organisations is inter-professional collaboration (IPC), which aims to overcome systemic fragmentation and increasingly complicated healthcare requirements that fall beyond the purview of a single practitioner. The review also displayed that a culture of cooperation, mutual respect, and trust among healthcare professionals is necessary for an efficient and successful healthcare system.

Therefore, the review then suggested the following to improve the efficacy of collaboration (SDG 17) among healthcare experts.

- ❖ Government should allocate adequate resources and funding to ensure sufficient staffing levels and dedicated space for surgical care at UNIOSUN Teaching Hospital.
- ❖ The government should encourage continuous professional development and training programs for healthcare professionals involved in surgical care.
- ❖ Healthcare professionals should foster open communication and teamwork through regular team discussions and meetings.
- ❖ The hospital management should provide interdisciplinary education and training opportunities to enhance understanding of terminologies and roles across healthcare professions.
- ❖ All healthcare professionals should promote mutual respect, trust, and recognition among healthcare

professionals to improve collaboration and morale.

- ❖ The hospital management should advocate for policies prioritising patient-centred care, safety protocols, and quality improvement initiatives.

### Limitations to the study

Certain limitations were inevitable in this review. However, the major limitation of this study is the unavailability of adequate information in selected studies.

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### Conflict(s) of Interests

The authors have no potential conflicts to openly and explicitly disclose. There are no competing interests to provide.

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