

Why is Teamwork in Health Care Important?

Teamwork: Collaboration and enhanced communication

Interdisciplinary teamwork is an important model for delivering health care to patients.

Teamwork in health is defined as two or more people who interact interdependently with a common purpose, working toward measurable goals that benefit from leadership that maintains stability while encouraging honest discussion and problem solving [1]. Researchers have found that integrating services among many health providers is a key component to better treat underserved populations and communities with limited access to health care [2].

As the name implies, teamwork in health care employs the practices of collaboration and enhanced communication to expand the traditional roles of health workers and to make decisions as a unit that works toward a common goal [3]. The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation [4] found that teams function better when they have a clear purpose and implement protocols and procedures. Also important is the use of meetings and other communication methods to discuss patient results, share information, and debate suggestions to improve performance [5]. Teamwork and collaboration are especially essential to care of patients in a decentralized health system with many levels of health workers [2].

Health care, by definition, is a multidisciplinary profession in which doctors, nurses, health professionals from different specialties must work together, communicate often, and share resources[3]. Health teams are often made up of a variety of professionals – called cadres in health care – each with specialized knowledge and responsible for different tasks. These multidisciplinary teams are made up to solve health problems [4]. Successful health teams strive to understand the patient’s situation, ask probing questions about the problem, make an initial assessment and, after discussion, provide a recommendation⁶. Teams can also work together to develop health promotion for diverse communities and instill disease prevention behaviors amongst patients [2].

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