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Consumer Voices: Client Representation in an Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice

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Introduction: Collaborative Practice is receiving increased attention as a model of health care delivery that positively influences effectiveness and efficiency of patient care while improving the work environment of health care providers. Current approaches to collaborative practice position consumers as members of the health care team, recognizing their unique contribution of the lived experience and its influence on patient outcomes. In response to the need for Interprofessional Education (IPE) for professionals entering the health care system, many Canadian universities have formed offices to support IPE for students. The Office of Interprofessional Education and Practice at one Canadian university recently completed its inaugural year of operation. As management of this new organization developed a vision statement, terms of reference, and goals and objectives, patient/client inclusion was deemed an essential ingredient in order to prepare students for the new reality of collaborative care.

Objectives: This poster presents the Office's reflection on patient/client representation over its first year. The poster offers insights for clinicians, educators and researchers who strive to incorporate the consumer voice in interprofessional initiatives but are uncertain of the process or best methods. It also presents a consideration of the future, sharing thoughts about how it will continue to enhance patient/client representation and utilize their expertise as it moves forward.

Description/Discussion: Examples of consumer participation in educational activities include the production of a film capturing one patient's story of illness, hospitalization and care for use in an interprofessional orientation activity for students, and the experience of patient/client representatives on the Steering Committee of a research project led by the Office. Consumer perspectives are prominent through personal quotes and photographs.

Conclusion/Contribution: Occupational therapy has valued client-centred practice for many years (Sumsion & Law 2006) and it is exciting to see these values extend to other team members. The process of consumer inclusion presented in this poster supports new models of health care delivery by informing occupational therapy educators about methods of implementation which emphasizes client-centred consumer inclusion, and highlights the importance of their contribution in the education of future health care providers.