

**An Interdisciplinary Approach to Post Registration Education  
in Pain**

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PURPOSE: A programme of study was developed which maximized the principles of shared learning and teaching to develop greater understanding of the subject matter and improve intra- and inter-disciplinary communication and teamwork. RELEVANCE: One approach to increasing understanding across professions is through shared learning and teaching, which has been advocated by many at both international and local levels, including the World Health Organization. Currently in the United Kingdom, the Department of Health and Higher Education Institutions are promoting shared learning across health professions, both pre- and post-registration, as a means of not only developing skills and competencies but also respect for other disciplines. This is echoed in the aims of the International Association for the Study of Pain, who identify inter-disciplinary working as the best way of meeting the needs of the people who access 'pain services'. DESCRIPTION: Allied Health Professionals undertook a study programme over 15 weeks covering psychosocial issues relating to the understanding of both the patient's and health professional's perspective on the experience of pain. The thirteen health professionals came from diverse practice areas, including intensive care, stroke units and musculoskeletal outpatients. A positive aspect of this programme was not only that the course material was delivered by health and discipline specific professionals such as nurses, physiotherapists, sociologists and psychologists, but that the majority of the sessions were delivered using a team teaching approach across the disciplines, thereby maximizing the principles of shared learning and teaching for both tutors and students. The advantage of the relatively small numbers of students on the programme was in providing activities that allow professions to interact in information sharing and decision-making; this interaction enabled the breakdown of professional rivalries and stereotyping which can inhibit practice. OBSERVATIONS: In evaluation of the module, students and tutors alike expressed positive attitudes to this experience, which can be summed up by one student's comment: 'having a mix of students and staff from different backgrounds made this module for me'. CONCLUSIONS: Increasing professional specialization may decrease communication across health disciplines yet professional philosophies identify collaboration between professions as essential for client-centred care. Shared learning and teaching programmes underpinned by sound educational reasons, and not delivered just as an economic imperative, may achieve an overall enhanced healthcare experience for the patient.