Building Capacity for Interprofessional Education in Dental Training: A Three-Year Progress Report

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Objectives

- Addressing oral health disparities in individuals with medically complex conditions (MCCs) and special healthcare needs (SHCNs) requires a dental workforce skilled in integrating social determinants of health (SDOH) and cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- This HRSA-supported project aims to enhance predoctoral dental education through interprofessional education (IPE), community partnerships, and mentorship.

Methods

- Expanded linkages with non-dental training programs and community organizations to strengthen the dental workforce pipeline serving vulnerable and underserved communities.
- Established a specialized oral healthcare education program to prepare dental educators for teaching the delivery of oral healthcare to individuals with MCCs and SHCNs.
- Enhanced student training in providing care for patients with MCCs.

Results

- Developed oral health-primary care collaboration agreements with nursing, medical, pharmacy and physician assistant schools in the St. Louis region.
- Partnered with 12 feeder schools and a 13% increase in Still Scholar and Hometown Scholar program applications.
- Created educational modules for faculty addressing oral health management in vulnerable populations and patients with MCCs.
- Designed case-based learning experiences to introduce students to the SDOH and patient management.
- Actively recruiting mentors to provide professional support in the alumni mentorship network.

Conclusions

- Significant progress has been made in fostering community partnerships and IPE opportunities, enhancing dental educators' and students' readiness to serve underserved and medically complex populations.
- However, challenges encountered include integrating new content into established curricula and time constraints for faculty and students.
- Overall, we expect to maintain this momentum by expanding partnerships, outcome evaluation and aligning with national health priorities to ensure a lasting impact.
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