Interprofessional education lays the foundation for addressing aged care workforce woes

Programs for students to learn interprofessional practice in aged care settings have been shown to increase their likelihood of choosing a career in this sector, a recent report has shown.

Aged care providers Brightwater Care Group in WA and Helping Hand Aged Care in SA have been running interprofessional education (IPE) programs over a number of years, aimed at increasing professional collaboration between students from all health disciplines in these settings.

An evaluation of the programs, funded by the National Health and Medical Research Council’s Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre, was recently undertaken to investigate their impact on residents, students and facility staff.

The report, released this week, showed clear benefits in the following areas:

- Increased positive perceptions of working in aged care from students
- Students reported they were more likely to consider a career in aged care following an IPE placement
- Increased knowledge of other professions among students and facility staff
- Additional support and social contact for residents

Following the success of the IPE programs and the many demonstrated benefits for residents, the Cognitive Decline Partnership Centre is now funding the development of an online program to embed IPE programs at aged care providers across Australia.

Named ‘IPEAC’ – Interprofessional Education in Aged Care - the program is a website-based ‘toolkit’ for aged care providers to facilitate student placements at their sites, due to be released early in 2017. Providers who are interested in the IPEAC toolkit or would like more information can contact the Project Coordinator.

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