

# Promoting Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care Practice

## Experiences in a tertiary teaching hospital

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### Introduction

Interprofessional collaboration (IPC) involves multiple health workers from different professions working together to provide the highest quality of care across settings<sup>1</sup>. Interprofessional (IP) teams are person-centred, relationship focussed, reflective and cohesive. Team members are interdependent, value their own profession and value and seek out the perspectives and contributions of other professions. Complex healthcare systems, chronic conditions and increasing specialities means interprofessional teams are more critical to provide comprehensive, person-centred holistic care to consumers.

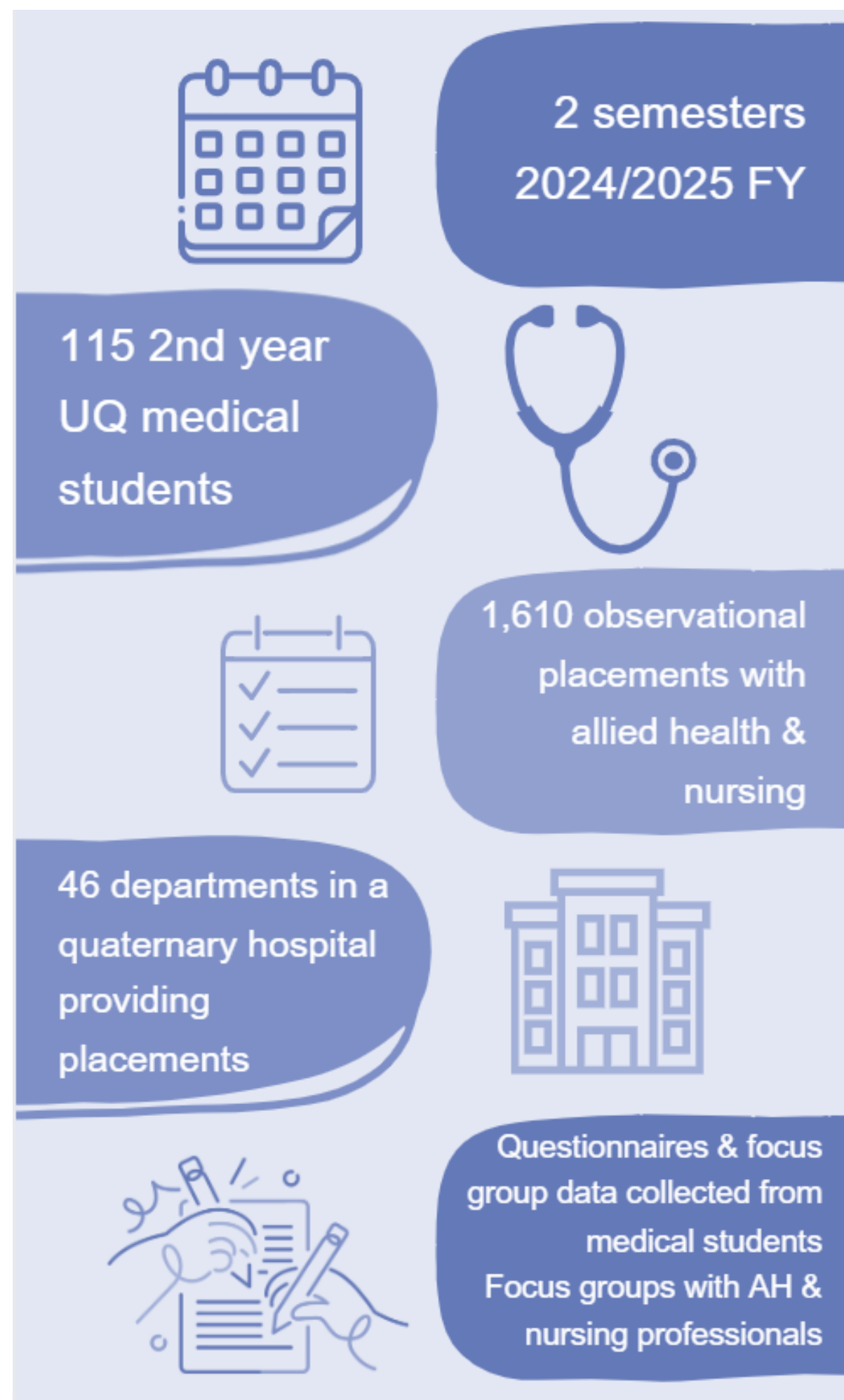
#### Benefits of medical students on allied health and nursing placements

There is strong research evidence that IPC leads to better patient outcomes (e.g., length of stay, mortality rates, chronic disease outcome measures), improved workforce indicators (e.g., attrition rates, workforce culture), and improved organisational outcomes (e.g., equity of access, cost efficiencies)<sup>2,3</sup>.

Developing IP competencies and IP values, qualities, drivers, and behaviours will support clinicians to be interprofessional in practice<sup>4,5</sup>.

Providing meaningful interprofessional collaboration opportunities for medical students as early as practical in their training is key to inculcating interprofessionalism in clinical practice<sup>8,9,10</sup>.

Observational placements with allied health and nursing professionals are one way of providing interprofessional collaboration opportunities for medical students. Observational placements are where medical students shadow allied health and nursing professionals while they undertake clinical practice. These placements provide medical students with the opportunity to experience the work of other members of the interprofessional healthcare team, gain exposure to a range of allied health and nursing professions and professionals, observe clinical communication skills, and observe interactions between members of the healthcare team<sup>11</sup>.



### Medical student observational placements

Observational placements allow medical students to shadow allied health and nursing professionals while they undertake clinical practice. The learning aims of these placements include:

- To experience the work of other members of the interprofessional healthcare team.
- To gain exposure to a range of allied health and nursing professionals.
- To observe clinical communication skills - processes of history taking, examination, investigation, diagnosis, and management.
- To observe interactions between members of the healthcare team.
- Build mutual respect and trust between professionals.

### What have we found so far?

Learnings from this initiative include:

- the importance of collaborative and trusting relationships and mutual respect between the University and the hospital to overcome challenges
- clear communication and negotiating achievable learning opportunities that benefitted the hospital, and the University are essential
- ensuring the initiative considered the impact on clinician workload and patient safety and outcomes.

Challenges made this initiative difficult to implement, such as:

- quaternary hospital
- workforce pressures and shortages
- limited physical space
- pressure to take medical students in addition to allied health and nursing students
- timetabling of observational placements to meet University and hospital availability, ongoing large-scale projects impacting on time and energy to participate in new initiatives.

### Insights from focus groups

Category	Key medical student insights	Key allied health & nursing professional insights
Definition of interprofessional identity (IPI)	Role within a team, beyond just being a doctor <i>"Interprofessional identity is not just about being a doctor; it's about understanding how you fit into a broader team, working towards a common goal."</i>	Understanding one's role in a collaborative healthcare team <i>"Healthcare is a team sport"</i>
Attitudes & values that contribute to IPI	Respect, curiosity, humility, patient-centredness <i>"The biggest value is respect—respect for every team member, regardless of their position or title. When you respect everyone, collaboration just falls into place."</i>	Open-mindedness, curiosity, humility, adaptability Respect, integrity, compassion, kindness, equity <i>"Seeing everyone on the same footing"</i>
Behaviours demonstrating IPI	Asking questions, engaging with AH staff, holistic thinking <i>"When I work in a team, I make sure I'm not just the doctor in the room; I'm actively listening and engaging with everyone, especially the allied health staff."</i>	Collaboration, role advocacy, mentoring, transparency <i>"Modelling best practice"</i>
Influences on IPI	AH/nursing placements, personal/family care experiences, past careers <i>"My personal experiences as a patient have shown me the importance of all roles in care—not just doctors. It made me more open to learning from everyone in the team."</i>	Clinical work, consumer experiences, mentorship, system navigation <i>"I treat most people exactly the same ... I think that translates to how I'm received within the team."</i>
Enablers to IPI	Time, culture, collaborative spaces, placement quality <i>"Having time to sit down and learn from everyone in the team and being in a space where all roles are valued—that's when interprofessional identity really thrives."</i>	Psychological safety, strong leadership, role clarity, inclusive communication <i>"Being supported to speak up"</i>
Barriers to IPI	Time constraints, hierarchies, minimal interaction across professions <i>"The biggest challenge is time—when everything moves so fast, you barely have a moment to engage with others, and that's where collaboration suffers."</i>	Professional hierarchies, unclear roles, time constraints, burnout <i>"Too busy to reflect"</i>
Impact of IPI on relationships	IPI enables collaboration when aligned, creates friction when values differ <i>"When you understand the value of every role in the team, you create an atmosphere of trust. That's when the real magic happens in collaboration."</i>	Interprofessional identity strengthens trust, communication, mutual respect; breaks down silos <i>"Improves team trust"</i>
Impact of IPI on collaborative practice	Interprofessional identity shapes practice; experiences refine identity; real-world exposure is essential <i>"Interprofessional identity shapes how we approach every situation. If we see ourselves as part of a team, we can make decisions together that lead to the best patient care."</i>	Interprofessional identity enhances interprofessional collaborative practice effectiveness and patient outcomes <i>"Best outcomes when we work as a team"</i>

### Conclusion

Results to date have demonstrated that medical students, allied health and nursing professionals are valuing the experience of having interprofessional collaborative learning opportunities.

### References

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