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# Developing Interprofessional Competence

## Theoretical and Empirical Contributions

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# ABSTRACT

**Background:** Different professions meet and work together in teams every day in health and social care. In order to identify and deliver the best quality of care for the patient, the teamworkers need to be both professionally and interprofessionally competent. How can higher education prepare teamworkers to be both professionally and interprofessionally competent? This thesis seeks to contribute theoretically and empirically to this issue. A starting point for interprofessional education (IPE) worldwide was when WHO presented a document entitled "Learning Together to Work Together for Better Health". The basic idea in this strategy was that it is favourable for undergraduate students and the development of their own professional identity to experience other professions in health and social sectors as early as during their undergraduate studies. Inherent in this scheme is that the various professions will work together in practice. The overall winner in this new thinking about education and professional practice would be the patient. One of the first systematic attempts to organize IPE academically was initiated in 1986 at the Faculty of Health Sciences (FHS) at Linköping University in Sweden. The "Linköping Model" has now yielded 25 years of practical experience and development of IPE curricula.

**Aims:** The overall aims of this thesis were to define, describe and measure effects and outcomes of interprofessional education/learning.

**Methods:** In the research papers theoretical, qualitative and quantitative methods have been used.

**Results:** The newly registered medical doctors educated at the FHS at Linköping University and exposed to IPE and PBL reported more confidence ( $p < 0.0001$ ) that their undergraduate studies had given them interprofessional skills and abilities to collaborate with other professions than medical students from all other medical faculties in Sweden. Nurses who had been exposed to interprofessional curricula during their undergraduate education at FHS reported to a greater extent ( $p = 0.003$ ) that they were prepared to work as a nurse. Furthermore, they also reported to a greater extent ( $p < 0.0001$ ) that their undergraduate education had prepared them to work with other health care professions. Other findings in this thesis were that female students in general and nursing students had a more positive view of interprofessional learning and were more open-minded about collaboration with other professions. Only to a minor extent did exposure to a more extensive interprofessional curriculum promote a positive attitude towards teamwork.

**Conclusions:** A major challenge to modern health care is the need for more interprofessional teamwork to improve the safety and quality of patient-centred care. This thesis indicates some directions for more successful interprofessional education.