

Interprofessional Collaboration: My experience as a MLA/T (Phlebotomist) at The Hospital for Sick Children



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With the ever-increasingly challenging healthcare environment and patients with complex healthcare needs, interprofessional collaboration enhances the collective action required to increase the quality of family-centered care as well as integrates the child and family contributions to the healthcare plan.¹ As a phlebotomist at the Hospital for Sick Children, I am committed to promoting the values and expectations of the hospital, which are respect, understanding, communication, accountability, flexibility and transparency.¹ In addition, I ensure that children and families not only have the best care but also experience a positive relationship with the healthcare team.

My main tasks as a phlebotomist include performing venipuncture to obtain

blood samples for diagnostic purposes, obtaining urine samples using a “urine bag” for non-toilet trained infant/toddlers, preparing samples for dispatch to corresponding laboratories and obtaining blood samples for specific research studies. All of these tasks require interprofessional collaboration in order to achieve the greatest result and highest quality of care. One of the unique aspects of working in this pediatric hospital is the Child Life service program that is available in many different units throughout the hospital. As a phlebotomist that works in both the outpatient clinic and inpatient wards, I have had the privilege to work with the Child Life Specialists when performing procedures. Child Life Specialists provide supportive relationships for patients, families and the healthcare team. They identify the physical, social and emotional responses of the child and the families for medical procedures. The Child Life Specialist explains the procedure using interactive tools, such as a tablet computer, and uses distraction techniques to relieve anxiety associated with venipuncture. Most importantly, the Child Life Specialist sometimes discusses the action plan with the parents and the phlebotomist prior to the venipuncture procedure. This is especially important when working with children with autism since these children are more likely to be intimidated by unfamiliar settings.² Possible action plans include using the tablet to demonstrate the venipuncture procedure or a play doll to show how venipuncture will be performed on the patient.²

In a hospital environment, a phlebotomist also works with nurses and physicians,

especially in inpatient units. The phlebotomist carries a pager and can be contacted by a nurse or physician using the intranet paging system. The paged message indicates the priority level of the venipuncture, such as STAT, timed or blood work for pre-operation, etc. Besides communication between the nurses and the phlebotomist, the nurses also notify the parents about the procedure beforehand so that the patients and the parents are well aware of their care plan schedules. In addition to the pager communication system, the nurse can also attach a “sticky note” called “My needle coping plan” (see figure 1) on the requisition. The “sticky note” is a very useful tool in notifying the phlebotomist about the patient’s needle coping method before performing the procedure. This is especially important when the patient needs Maxilene®/EMLA® (topical anesthetic cream) which requires

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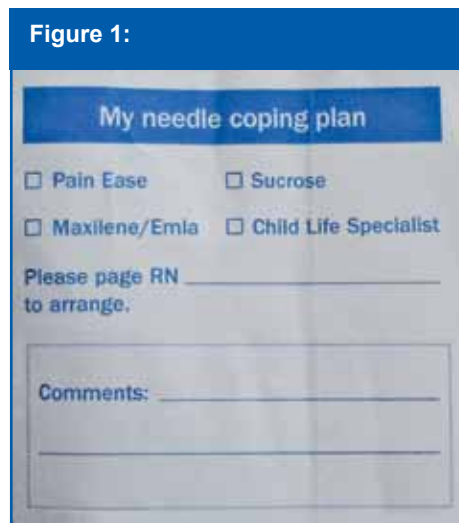
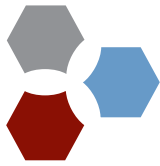


Figure 1:



2015 MLA/T Student Achievement Award

Aline Letourneau (left), OSMT District 2 Director, presents Nathalie Champagne with the 2015 MLA/T Student Achievement Award. Sarah Campbell, (right) Associate Dean, Health Sciences and Emergency Services, is shown representing Northern College of Applied Arts and Technology. The presentation took place on November 17, 2015 at Northern College.

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application on the desired venipuncture site half hour to an hour before the procedure. These communication tools enhance the quality of patient care and minimize possible errors while enabling the phlebotomist to prioritize tasks. Prioritization of tasks is essential since phlebotomists are responsible for venipuncture in all inpatient units in the hospital.

Interprofessional education provides the opportunity to learn and work together to enhance patient care at Sick Kids. Interprofessional Education is a priority at Sick Kids and educating healthcare professionals is vital in all stages of development from students to practicing professionals.¹ The students and staff at Sick Kids have the privilege of attending educational rounds and poster sessions at the hospital. These educational rounds and poster sessions are designed to educate healthcare workers about the job duties of other healthcare professionals and the

challenges they encounter. These educational sessions are useful to address the core competency required for effective interprofessional collaboration, such as communication, patient/family/community care, role clarification, team functioning, collaborative leadership and interprofessional conflict resolution.¹ Lastly, the Learning Institute at Sick Kids provides a simulation centre where interprofessional teams can practice and develop skills in a real-time and safe environment.³ Healthcare professionals from different disciplines can collaborate and work in scenarios that are designated to help the healthcare team identify and respond to a variety of clinical situations.³

Overall, working as a phlebotomist at Sick Kids is both a challenging yet very rewarding experience. It can be challenging since we work with a diverse population in terms of patient age ranging from newborns to teenagers as well as with patients from a variety of cultures with different languages and backgrounds. On the other hand, it is a

very rewarding experience since I believe the Hospital for Sick Children has the best interprofessional collaborative environment enabling healthcare professionals to work together as a team and allowing them to provide the greatest healthcare to patients and their families. ❖

References:

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3. Simulation Centre (2009). Retrieved from <http://www.sickkids.ca/Learning/SpotlightOnLearning/Simulation-Centre/>