

Teamwork, how do we get there?

By Eric M. Banagay, LMSW

Teamwork is something that can make a hospice team more efficient, responsive, and more able to meet patient's needs. This article will address how the different members of the interdisciplinary team can work together using the optimistic model of inter-professional collaboration to continue to make VistaCare the hospice of choice.

The optimistic model of inter-professional collaboration involves three hypotheses, (Hudson, 2006). The first hypothesis states the promotion of professional values to patients help form the basis of inter-professional partnership, (2006). With this hypothesis, the author suggests that people striving for increased teamwork try to develop a sense of professional distinctiveness, (2006). I am not suggesting co-workers develop rigid boundaries and guidelines, but urge co-workers to learn what other disciplines in their work environment are required and established to do. VistaCare could benefit from this by all disciplines re-examining what each member of the hospice team does and can do within the parameters of policies and procedures. Staff can also go as far as meeting with other team members to learn particular values and ethics that are important to that discipline.

The second hypothesis states socialization to an immediate work group can over-ride professional or hierarchical differences among staff, (Hudson, 2006). This hypothesis tries to overcome the barrier of one or more staff feeling inferior to another team member, (2006). VistaCare helps to support the uniqueness and importance of each discipline with its mission statement. Nurses, certified nurses' aids, and physicians work with the physical aspect and spiritual care coordinators, social workers, volunteers, and bereavement coordinators work with the spiritual and emotional aspect of patient care.

The third hypothesis states effective inter-professional working can lead to more effective service delivery and user outcomes, (Hudson, 2006). This hypothesis reflects how consumers of services appreciate their service providers working together to meet their needs, (2006). VistaCare wants every patient and family to feel they have gotten the best care while on hospice. To achieve this, team members need to incorporate speed, flexibility, and creativity.

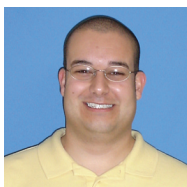
Members of a team can come together when crises occur to decrease the time it takes for a crisis to be solved. This article is not implying teams need to meet every time a crisis occurs, but rather have a plan established amongst the team regarding who can respond and who can help when the time comes.

Team members can become flexible by helping another member with certain tasks as long as policy and procedures are not violated. According to Hudson, (2006), the social workers in one study volunteered to take incontinence pads to patients so nurses could continue their visits.

Creativity can be an important tool for team members to use when situations arise. Sometimes a problem can appear to be Mount Everest, but a little creativity can turn the problem into an ant hole. Sometimes creativity requires members to think out of the box, if policies and procedures are not violated, thinking out of the box can be invaluable.

In conclusion, teamwork is something that can be achieved and incorporated into patient care. Hospice care can be very difficult and emotionally draining at times, but if a team works together, the "WOW" factor can be seen everyday.

Hudson, B. (2006). Integrated team working: you can get it if you really want it: part 1. *Journal of Integrated Care*, 14(1), 13-21.



Eric M. Banagay, LMSW: Eric joined VistaCare in November 2004 as the first social worker for site 205. He received his bachelor degrees in Social Work and Psychology in 2002 and recently finished his Masters in Clinical Social Work. Eric has worked in a variety of environments, but feels hospice is his calling. Eric has been married to his wife Misty for two years and continues to receive her unconditional love and support.