

# HOW AND IN WHAT CONTEXT DO OSTEOPATHIC MEDICAL STUDENTS LEARN ABOUT INTERPROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

Janet A. Head French

Dr. Karen Cockrell and Dr. Joe Donaldson, Dissertation Advisors

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore how and in what context osteopathic medical students learn about interprofessional practice. A mixed method design was used to gather data on attitudes of first- and second-year osteopathic medical students toward interdisciplinary practice and to elicit a rich description of their experience in a community-based elder visit program. Sixteen students participated in the qualitative portion of the study and 329 in the quantitative portion.

The qualitative findings described the students' experiences of interdisciplinary interactions, and the quantitative findings described the attitudes of students before and after the program. Qualitative data included transcripts of focus groups and interviews, field notes and surveys. Based on the quantitative data, students enter osteopathic medical school with (a) generally positive attitudes about the value of teamwork as a contributor to quality of patient care, (b) some concerns about the effort required to develop and maintain effective teams, (c) reservations about sharing leadership in the team, and (d) relative confidence about their teamwork skills. Post-program data showed statistically significant positive change in attitudes about the value of teamwork, efficiency of teams, and teamwork skills.

Principles from intergroup contact theory and a knowledge creation metaphor provided a framework for viewing students' reflections of their interdisciplinary teamwork experience. As a result of the program, students' expressed awareness of the importance of diversity of skills, communication, and teamwork were increased.