

INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION (IPE) PROGRAM AT CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY OFFERS TEAM-BASED COMMUNICATION

Concordia University Wisconsin nursing student Megan Zusy found herself on a Tuesday evening in February engaged in discussion with about 10 other students in varying health care programs about a hypothetical patient, Mr. Lopez.

The students were given a case study that involved the 71-year-old Lopez, who maintained an active lifestyle for most of his life, but began suffering from chronic knee pain soon after retirement. When he wasn't able to find much relief from pain medication, his physicians ultimately recommended he have knee replacement surgery.

Zusy and her group members, which included students in pharmacy, nursing, social work, occupational therapy, physical therapy and medicine, spent time evaluating the case and then communicating their assessments from the lens of their respective programs.

"It was helpful learning how to communicate with each profession because the more communication, the better off your patient is," Zusy says. "Just knowing more about your resources is definitely helpful for opening up lines of communication."

Interprofessional communication was a goal of the event, which brought together more than 200 other students pursuing degrees in one of Concordia's six health and human services programs. Also in attendance

were about 25 students from the Medical College of Wisconsin.

The event – one of four throughout the academic year – is part of Concordia's budding Interprofessional Education (IPE) program, led by Michael Oldani, Ph.D., MS.

"If students learn to rely on their team members, on other professionals, they're going to have a lot less burnout and really be ready for a future career in team-based health care," Oldani explains.

"Research over the past decade shows that increased teamwork among health care professionals can significantly reduce errors, improve the patient's overall quality of care and drive professionals to take a more patient-centered approach," says Oldani. Furthermore, because IPE has been strongly supported by organizations such as the World Health Organization and the Institute of Medicine, all relevant health programs are being accredited with IPE as part of their curriculum.

Concordia has set itself apart from other schools in many ways, says Oldani. "We're unique in that we're diverse enough in terms of our health professions offered, yet small enough that we can fine-tune and coordinate the experience," Oldani explains. "I think the students still feel that it's very student-centered, and they don't get lost in the shuffle."

As a Christian university, Concordia's mission and some of its other programs,

such as Lay Ministry, also provide an added opportunity.

"We can make it even a little bit more holistic than other places because of that," says Oldani.

"Our mission of helping students develop in mind, body and spirit for service in the Church and world truly applies to patient-centered care," he adds.

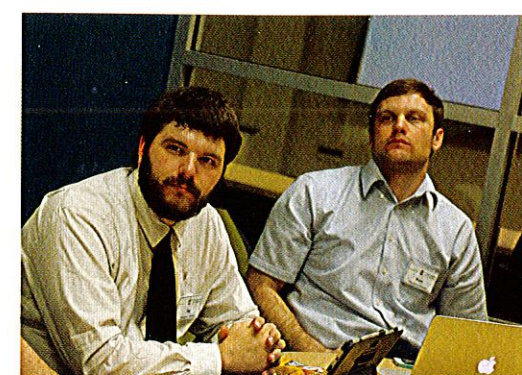
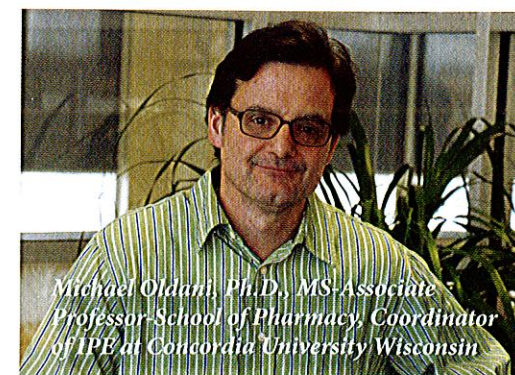
As the program grows, students' IPE learning opportunities are expanding as well. "Concordia was already on the cutting edge in thinking about IPE and implementing it ahead of other institutions," Oldani says. "What I think is evolving now for us is all these different professions here realize they can take a leadership role regionally. Our IPE efforts are a very strong recruiting tool, and that's exciting for our students and faculty, and for our university."

To learn more about Concordia's IPE program and find opportunities, search "IPE @ CUW" at cuw.edu.

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