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Collaborations for the Community: The Partnership of Extension and Pharmacy

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Collaborations for the Community: The Partnership of Extension and Pharmacy

Abstract

Through partnering of resources and expertise of Ohio State University Extension and the College of Pharmacy, programs that affect the health of Ohio consumers are being developed. Early collaborative projects involved medication consultation for seniors by Pharmacy faculty and students, and development of fact sheets on herbs and dietary supplements. The Ohio Extension/Pharmacy Alliance for Community Health (Ohio EPACH) is currently focusing on health literacy needs among child caregivers and among the elderly and their caregivers.

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Background

The Ohio State University (OSU), a land-grant institution, has a strong tradition of excellence in teaching, research, and service, and a commitment to advance the well-being of Ohioans and the global community through the creation and dissemination of knowledge. Individually, each college exhibits distinction in its respective field; however, together, they all contribute to growth and development of our communities throughout Ohio and beyond its boundaries.

Within the university, the College of Pharmacy (Pharmacy) has been successful in acquiring ongoing research support and is nationally recognized as a leader in community pharmacy. Within the community, Pharmacy faculty and students participate in established service-learning experiences including:

- Patient education to diabetes support groups
- Medication management and counseling to senior citizens
- Medication safety discussions at elementary schools

OSU Extension (Extension) faculty and professionals are recognized within the communities they serve as trusted sources of research-based information. They have a long history of effective community-based, non-formal education programming targeting financial management, nutrition, food safety, childcare, child development, and community health issues.

In 1999, because both the College of Pharmacy and OSU Extension were committed to addressing community health issues, administrators and selected faculty began to discuss ways to partner program development and research resources in order to effectively address the health issues of Ohioans.

The underlying philosophy of the newly formed partnership was "doing what each does best." A task force of representatives from Pharmacy and Extension was created. Members from Pharmacy included the Dean, the Director of Experiential Programs, and three faculty members involved in student service-learning. Extension membership included the Director of OSU Extension, the Assistant Directors for Family and Consumer Sciences and for Community Development, and the Health Specialist.

Key to this task force was the commitment of administrators to university outreach and engagement. Task force members outlined the contributions that each partner brought to the table. Extension had a well-established county and community based infrastructure, including OSU Extension faculty and professionals located in Ohio counties, a network of community leaders, established programming, and positive name recognition. Pharmacy had a strong research base, a network of healthcare providers throughout the state, an active commitment to engage students in service learning, and the innovative educational experience of faculty.

Partnership Projects

An early project targeted herbs and dietary supplements. OSU Extension Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) nutrition issues team members developed a series of fact sheets to address questions consumers and health professionals had about supplements. Two Pharmacy faculty members provided critical reviews. One Pharmacy faculty member joined the nutrition issues team to provide an in-service on dietary supplements to Ohio's Extension FCS professionals and a continuing education program for pharmacists. The successes of this collaboration and its outcomes have been shared as poster presentations at professional meetings and have earned regional and national recognition from professional associations.

Concurrently, county agents were contacted to identify collaborative programming opportunities for Pharmacy and Extension. Crawford County's Senior Health Day was the pilot project for a county-based project. The Extension FCS Agent worked with local healthcare professionals to plan, organize, and publicize the program. During the event, Pharmacy faculty and students provided medication counseling through a "brown bag" medicine program. Seniors were invited to bring all medications they were using to an individualized counseling session with a pharmacist or pharmacist-supervised Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) student. An outcome of this event was the development of a Crawford County committee of healthcare professionals and stakeholders that works with Pharmacy faculty and Extension professionals to develop educational programs to meet the healthcare needs of consumers in that area.

The College of Pharmacy and OSU Extension have formalized their collaboration as the Ohio Extension/Pharmacy Alliance for Community Health (Ohio EPACH). The Ohio EPACH task force consists of Pharmacy administrators and faculty and Extension administrators and faculty (including Extension agents). The task force is currently focusing on health literacy issues and targeting program development to:

- Parents and childcare providers within Ohio's Appalachian regions
- Geriatric patients and their care providers

A program for parents and childcare providers is being piloted in four Ohio counties. The program will be expanded into eight counties within 2 years and then expanded into other Appalachian regions. Ohio EPACH is also investigating program expansion through involvement with the parish nurse system and is exploring initiatives addressing unique healthcare needs of the geriatric patient population.

Pharmacy Student Participation

Student involvement in Ohio EPACH programming is a priority for the upcoming year. The first entry-level Pharm.D. student recently completed a 1-month advanced practice experiential rotation (during the last year of the curriculum) with the FCS Agent in Ross County. The student's activities targeted parents and childcare providers and included:

- Survey distribution and tabulation of gathered data,
- Development of educational materials on acetaminophen use, and
- Brown bag medication counseling

While incorporation of advanced practice students will expand over the next year, other pharmacy students, at various levels of training, will also have opportunities to learn about community health through service-learning projects conducted by Ohio EPACH.

Conclusion

Future projects with the task force will focus on health literacy related to two target population groups--children and the elderly. As program development grows, so will involvement of pharmacy

students and integration with community stakeholders. Thus far, the collaboration of Pharmacy and Extension has resulted in health-based projects that will:

- Contribute to the overall well-being of Ohioans,
- Provide a service-learning opportunity for students, and
- Establish a connection between university administration and faculty and the community they serve.

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