

Midwifery and medical students—learning together in rural communities

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Pauline Glover is an experienced midwife with over 30 years' experience in midwifery clinical practice, education and research. She is currently an Associate Professor and Course Coordinator of Midwifery at Flinders University, Adelaide. Pauline has a passion for empowering midwifery students to learn so that they in turn can empower women in their birthing experiences. She has been instrumental in curriculum development and research into how students learn. Her current research is in simulation, assessment in the clinical area and second life. She is a proud grandmother of 4, a Zontian and a passionate knitter.

Medical students are expected to gain knowledge and experience in women's health, which includes obstetrics and gynaecology, during their clinical placement rotations. Midwifery students who undertake a three-year undergraduate program gain their knowledge and experience in women's health, midwifery and obstetrics over a much longer time. Current developments in strategies to 'share' the learning between disciplines, recommends innovations to explore interprofessional approaches to teaching and learning. This paper will present the results of an innovative teaching program in which medical and midwifery students from Flinders University Adelaide learnt from each other.

The innovative strategy used two weekend workshops six months apart where year 3 midwifery students from the Bachelor of Midwifery (Pre-registration) and year 3 medical students from the Graduate Entry Medical Program who are currently on a 12-month longitudinal placement in a rural town (Parallel Rural Community Curriculum) learnt and spent time together. The aim of the activity was to breakdown professional boundaries, facilitate communication and foster relationships to promote professional collaboration.

Education strategies included interactive teaching and learning using role play with a focus on teamwork and communication skills and simulation. Included in the innovation was the opportunity for urban midwifery students to explore rural health services as a possible employment option once they graduate. Social activities gave the students time to talk about living and working in a rural area.

Evaluation of the project to determine its effectiveness and the benefits and lessons learnt will be presented. It is hoped that this innovative teaching strategy will lead to a new generation of health professionals to match a new generation of health service and delivery.