Multi-competencies: A challenge for the allied health professions

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ABSTRACT. The 21st century brings new challenges to academic medical centers and universities who are responsible to prepare health professionals. These academics medical centers and universities need to respond more effectively to the demands of the health market place. The Health Care reform has brought about many changes within the health care field. Perhaps none of these changes is more dramatic than the impact on the allied health professional. No longer can this professional rely on "skills of old" to compete in today's market place. One of the most important strategy will be the transformation of the specialized allied health professional to a multi-skilled, multi-layered generalized health care provider. Advance practice nurses and paramedics will take over some of physicians' duties such as diagnose and prescription of medications and treatment to the patients. For individuals to move vertically to positions and to be marketable in health care settings, they need to increased their personal and technical skills, and health care knowledge. In order to survive, the health care professional will need to gain increased competencies and skills in several areas rather than obtain proficiency in one specific area. *Key words: multi-competencies; multi-skills; allied health professionals*

Health Care reform has brought about many changes within the health care field. Perhaps none of these changes is more dramatic than the impact on the allied health professional. No longer can this professional rely on "skills of old" to compete in today's market place. The requirements of a modifying health care system, including the shift form a Biomedical Concept to a Biopsychological concept and the a shift from treatment based perspectives to prevention activities will require the professional to develop new strategies to meet service demands. The most important of these strategies will be the transformation of the specialized allied health professional to a multi-skilled, multi-layered generalized health care provider. In order to survive, the health care professional will need to gain increased competencies and skills in several areas rather than obtain proficiency in one specific area. It will take cooperation with the educational system and the existing health care system to enable the professional to achieve this level of multi-skilled functioning. With out this transition the allied health professional will face an even more uncertain future.

Health Care Reform

What is driving the health reform movement is that health cost currently consume one seventh of every dollar in the Unite States. This translates in 14% of the gross domestic product (GDP) or a $912 billion dollars/year. Therefore, most people agree that health care reform is needed in the United States. There are over 35 million Americans estimated to be without health insurance and most of them do not have the means to pay for medical expenses and hospital care. There are many other Americans who are inadequately insured and could face serious financial burdens if they were become ill. Due to a variety of reasons (new technology, health specialists, drugs, equipment, the aging of the population, malpractice practice insurance, etc.) the costs of health care are skyrocketing and total health care expenditures are rising [1].

The crisis in health care in the United States should lead to search for alternative system of health care delivery. The problems are deep and involve not just the question of financing health care bit, more fundamentally, the

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organization of the whole health sector. Most discussion regarding health care reform tends to focus on the delivery and financing systems and ignores two key components of change: the health professions and the education of the health professionals. Education by itself is hardly sufficient for reform system. But modification of the skills, attitude, and values of health care providers, as well as the availability and distribution of health professionals, is a critical component of long-term, sustained change. The skills, attitudes, and values of health professionals shape the fundamental ways in which health care is provided.

Multi-Competencies

The health workforce is the infrastructure of the health care delivery system. Even with the major technological advances, it is the health worker who ultimately determines the availability, quality, and cost of health services. Any effort to reform or improve the health services or control cost must consider the supply, distribution, use, and education of the health work force. Moreover, any change in financing, organization or technology will also impact on health personnel. Achievement of health care reform depends on acceptance of shared responsibilities, among government at every level, health professionals, private and voluntary sectors, communities, families and individuals. As described above, health care reform will revolutionize the job descriptions of almost all health professionals, including allied health care workers. In response, professionals in the field need to begin to take the steps to develop skills that will lead to a multi-competency level of functioning.

According to Webster's Dictionary a skill is defined as " a great ability or proficiency; expertness that comes form training practice etc........." (p. 1334). Multi-Skilled is defined as, consisting of many different parts- specifically the acquisition and integration of several skill areas that enable the individual to perform at an optimal level of functioning. However in the demands of today's health care field simple knowledge or rudimentary skills in several areas of service is not enough to propel the professional forward into meeting the challenging demands and needs of individuals and organizations in the health care arena.

The professional needs to develop competencies in several areas that will serve to cultivate and create greater opportunities for participation within the frame work of the health care field. For purposes of this paper a competency is defined as " the general ability that someone shows to specific practice" [2]. Moreover, the Pew Health Professions Commission defined competencies as capabilities related to performing the duties of a "good citizen and professional" [3]. This ability is a product of the domains of concept, skills and attitude that someone posses to accomplish a specific task. It is knowledge, application and integration of these three areas that enables the individual to achieve a level of competency compatible with professional development. It is multiply competency in several areas that will allow the professional the ability to compete in changing health care filed.

The changing demands of the health care system will require the professional to achieve competency in several areas as well as within several disciplines. Already there are many agencies taking steps to train individuals to perform multiple tasks. In a survey of 546 hospitals, 25% of hospitals had trained employees to perform more than one task. The most popular way to achieve this has been to teach a second clinical skill to experienced clinical workers, accounting for about 65% of cross-training in this hospitals.

Due to advances in technology, increased access to services, changing demographics and a shift to managed care, the professional faces a work environment full of changing roles and expectations [4]. This new set of demands requires the professional to develop and utilize skills once reserved for 'other' professionals within the filed. The professional will not only be expected to develop greater skills related to their own discipline, but to broaden skills that once remained defined by professional boundary issues. This change will occur on two levels- general competency related knowledge and skills and boundary skills. General skills or competencies are those that fall within the realm of the discipline, but have traditionally been performed by others within the field trained specifically for that task. Boundary skills are those skills that fall outside the real of the discipline, but due to changing emphasis and roles become the responsibility of the professional health care provider.

Competencies of Professionals in the Future

Richardson [5] discussed several recommendations made by the Pew Commission in regards to competency of professionals in the future. The competencies discussed are those that fall within the general competency level described above. In the article, Richardson describes the following seven competencies as being necessary for health professional development; community health care, clinical care, accountability, technology and cost effective care, preventative medicine, involvement of the individual client in the decision making process, and information management.

    1. Community health care: understand all the determinants of health and work with members of the community to improve their health. Understand the particularity of every community.

2. Clinical care: have the up-date clinical skills necessary to work with people from different cultures.

3. Accountability: function in a new health care setting & interdisciplinary team arrangement. Emphasized high quality, cost-effective, integrate services.

4. Technology and cost effective care: balance cost & quality in the decision making process & understand & apply increasingly complex & costly technology & use it appropriately.

5. Preventative medicine: emphasize primary & secondary preventive strategies, & help everyone to maintain & promote healthy behaviors.

6. Involvement of the individual client in the decision making process: patients and their families participate actively in decisions regarding their personal health care in evaluating its quality and acceptability.

7. Information management: manage & use large volume of scientific technological & patient information & maintain professional competency throughout practice life.

He goes on to discuss the importance of the professional attaining competency in all of these areas as a means of providing health care that is holistic and centered on meeting the demands of the client within a complicated health care system. Richardson [5] emphasized the need for the professional to increase their knowledge and skills and to create opportunities to develop new skills that will allow better service provision.

For any health care organization, health care training and development must increase the probability, potential and performance of all employees. For individuals to move vertically to positions and to be marketable in the health care settings, they need to increase their personal and technical skills and health care knowledge. Moreover, with this increase in skills they will be able to improve their levels of competency in several areas.

Major Competencies Areas

There are several major competency areas in which professionals in the health care field need to gain skills. First, boundary spanning skills. This encompasses two major roles, broker and innovator. Competencies for the broker role include building and maintaining a power base,

negotiating agreement and commitment and presenting ideas for future development. Competencies for the innovator role include living with change, managing change and critical thinking [6].

Another major competency area is human relation skills. This involves the professional's role as a mentor and group facilitator. Competencies for the mentor role include an understanding of self and others, interpersonal communication skills, and development of subordinates.

Competencies for the group facilitator role include team building, participatory decision making and conflict management [6].

A third related competency area is coordinating skills. This encompass the roles of monitor and coordinator. Competencies for the role of monitor include receiving and organizing information, evaluating routine information and responding to routine information. Competencies for the role of coordinator include planning , organizing and controlling personnel and services [6].

Directing skills are also crucial to professional development. Roles in this area include producer and director. Competencies for the producer role include personal productivity monitoring others, time management and stress management. Competencies for the director role include taking the initiative, goal setting and effective delegating of responsibilities.

Communication will be a crucial skill in the development of the professional, particularly in light of advances in technology and increased coordination and delivery of services. Good communication skills are adaptable to many different audiences. Both written and vocal communication skills are important for any health professional. Communication in the health arena has two specific purposes; to educate and to facilitate positive health behavior changes. Being explicitly aware of the purpose and tailoring the message to the receiver are essential elements of good communication skills. The information that is going to be communicated needs to present supporting evidence that is understandable and believable. Credibility is the key to success. The professional needs to have skills in this area to develop levels of competency that allow the flow of information to reach the targeted audience. The professional needs to be able to communicate at all levels so that required behavioral changes in clients may occur. Without knowledge in this area, the professional may find that the information. however well prepared, does not effectuate the desired behavioral change or motivate others to seek change or perform a specific action.

Information technology is at the forefront in terms of learning new skills and developing competencies. The professional will need to develop strong computer and data processing skills. The professional should be able to utilize computer technology for work processing, data base management, electronic spreadsheets, and data communication. Perhaps no more is the future more important than in the exchange of information via the computer terminal. With access to the internet and other communication resources the professional will be able to collect and analyze much more information. It will

revolutionize the type all level of communication possible within the health care field [7].

The allied health professional needs to be on the forefront of this technology. The acquisition and dissemination of information will enable the professional to better meet the needs of the clients being served. In addition, the professional can receive instant information that can increase problem-solving abilities and create greater opportunities for job enrichment and productivity. With literally thousands of computer software programmed available, the professional needs to be aware of the type of system best suited to meet the demands of that particular work setting. In addition, the advances in computer technology have enabled many clients to communicate needs at a much different level. Clients who were uncommunicative due do illness or injury, now have a viable means of communication. In order to meet the needs of this population the professional needs to be aware of communication avenues these individuals utilize. In the same breath, the professional needs to learn how to use computers to enhance educational development and educational programs. With a computer in every classroom, the professional without one may find they do not have the skills necessary to meet the growing demands of the clientele being served. Modern technology will make it almost impossible for the professional with limited computer skills to survive. It is one competency area that the professional must gain needed and valuable skills in.

A final skill that the professional will need is the ability to secure funding for programs and services. With limited access to funds and even greater crunching of health care dollars, the professional will need to obtain more funding for programs. This includes grant writing, fund raising and other projects that will enable the professional to provide needed services. The professional should be able follow the basic steps in securing moneys for funding programs including; to conduct assessments to determine feasibility of grant funding form agencies, search for funding sources, approach agencies about funding, identify government resources write a proposal for funds, establish a budget and maintain open communication with the funding sources for future revenues [8]. A professional who acquires these skills has a much better chance of surviving in an environment of shrinking health care dollars.

It is crucial that the professional develop competencies in all of the areas above and gains the needed skills to survive in a changing health care environment. However, these are just the general competencies that the individual must master, on a deeper level the individual must learn the skills that enable them to cross the boundaries into the realm of "other" professionals. The changes in the health care system is slowly eroding the bounds that have traditionally defined each discipline. This erosion has lead to crossing over of professional practices [9].

Skill Combination for Multiskilled Health Practitioners

This change is apparent in many different settings, but perhaps most clear in the Occupational Therapy-Therapeutic Recreation realm. These two disciplines have tried for years to hammer out "separateness" by defining specific job responsibilities for each profession. In many agencies these two disciplines have worked side by side with only limited bounder issues. However, the shrinking allocation of funds for particular programs have forced many agencies to either hire an Occupational Therapist or a Therapeutic Recreation Specialist. In doing this, the agency is causing the professional to assume more responsibility in another professional area. This means that the professional needs to learn more about another profession and how to meet the clients needs in increased programming areas. The professional will not only have to learn new technical skills, but develop an appreciation and theoretical understanding of the professional responsibilities one is assuming. This will be a very difficult transition for many professionals to make. However, due to decreased funding, many more professionals will find themselves assuming increased responsibilities outside their traditional professional realm.

Another example of cross-over is seen in the nursing profession. Due to hospital cutbacks, many nurses are finding that they have to assume the role of educator and trainer. In many cardiac care units, nurses not only provide needed monitoring services, but also patient education and physical fitness information. Nurses are finding that they must educate patients in regard to diet, exercise, physical fitness and other areas. While this once the realm of the health educator, cutback have necessitated that nursing staff assume this responsibility. In some cases, nursing staff must also assist patients in performing daily range of motion exercises and conditioning exercises. This has traditionally been a part of the Physical Therapist job, but with these therapist only working on a referral basis follow-up care must be assumed by nursing staff or other professionals working directly with the client.

As seen from above multi-competent professionals will be the allied health care workers of the future. It is not a matter of time for this to happen as it is already evolving and taking shape now. That leads to the question of how to prepare students and practitioners for this rapid change in responsibilities and job descriptions. Preparation for this change must occur in cooperation with the educational system and within the workforce environment.

Strategiesmust be developed to educate future health care workers and provide training for those lareafy in the system.

University and Institutional Setting

First, the educational system as the major socialization force in American culture, must acknowledge that current educational practices are not adequate enough to meet the demands of the health care field. With many health education programs closing down or cutting back, due to limited funds, educating students for the future becomes even more important [10]. Changes in the curriculum should include increased emphasis placed on training professionals to work in the community setting. Eventhough all indicators point to decentralization of the hospital unit, classroom activities still focus predominately on clinical settings and treatment practices. The student needs to have opportunities to develop skills in community based agencies and services, that fall outside the more traditional clinical settings [3].

Autio [11] delineated several curriculum changes and additions that should be undertaken to improve the overall quality of educational services for those in the allied health field. She views the following as important goals for shaping the future educational system and preparing students to work in a changing health care environment;

> 1. Increase students ability to think critically rather that teach them time and place-bound facts and limited skills.
> 2. Focus on the group rather than the individual-focus on interdisciplinary skills- and place value on the team.
> 3. Tech clinical competency skills.
> 4. Implement active learning strategies that enable the student to problem -solve and attain integrated, cumulative learning experiences.
> 5. Teach students to anticipate and adapt to change (p.626)

Moreover, it is crucial that students in the allied health field learn about other disciplines, particularly in terms of theoretical backgrounds and technical skills. Students should be exposed to hands on training in other areas and c should take classes that enable them to explore and learn about other disciplines. Educators should share and disseminate information with each other and take the initiate to include students from other emphasis areas. Combining classes, materials and expertness from different will allow the students to gain a better appreciation of the holistic service system and to become better aquatinted with demands of other professional practice. Only through cooperation can the allied health field hope to turn out competent graduates and leaders in the field.

Hospital and Workplace Setting

A second area in which learning must take place is the work environment. The workforce must create opportunities for individuals to grow and develop on the job. An effective and efficient level of instruction must take place that will allow the professional to gain the needed competencies to meet service demands. Staff training can take many different forms, but the overall emphasis should be on creating a learning environment in which staff can gain needed skills and knowledge.

Lombardi [12] describes several avenues that managers can utilize to train personnel. It should be noted that these should focus on allowing staff to gain competencies in specific areas that will increase professional growth and development.

> 1. Peer input Seminars- Staff from each discipline sharing information with others about service provision and technical skills.
> 2. In- service training- Establishing specific classroom type learning experiences for staff on diverse subjects.
> 3. Organization-generated education- Seminars, workshops and other educational opportunities that enable staff to gain needed skills. This can be done within a department or agency wide.
> 4. Outside reading or Journal Sources- provide educational literature to allow staff to be more aware of pertinent issues affecting delivery of services.
> 5. Formal Education- Providing staff the opportunity for continuing education in a formal classroom setting such as a college or university.
> 6. Mentoring- Provide staff the opportunity to work with others and develop skills in many areas of the agency.
> 7. Outside Networking- Exchange of information, services and training with other agencies or individuals in the community. This is an excellent source of provision for cross-training purposes.

The above is my no means an exhaustive list of approaches to staff training. The prudent manager will recognize the need for additional training and design specific programs to meet the needs of the agency and the professional. The manger should be creative in his or her approach and allow input from staff as to the methods that best promote growth and development. Finally, the manger should encourage participation in the learning process and motivate employees to seek self-directed learning experiences.

The authors of this paper believe that the best way to achieve learning is thorough the "Competency Triangle"

[13] This method of learning is particularly adaptable in the work force setting where boundary training is necessary to meet service demands. The triangle takes into consideration four levels of learning as well as the attitude of the learner and the differences between gain skills and mastering a level of competency. The first level, interpersonal, is the simplest level of learning. This involves the development of communication skills, interpersonal skills and rudimentary technical skills, such as computer usage and documentation. The next level involves the development of content knowledge. This involves the acquisition of information that applies to a specific profession. It involves learning the essential meaning of a given profession in terms of service provision and program development. It is the necessary understanding that an individual must have to perform at an entry level in that profession. At the next level, technical skills, the individual moves form and understanding of the profession to the development of an ability to actually perform skills within that profession. this would include program development, critical thinking, documentation, creativity, and other higher level mastery skills. Finally, the individual must be able to think on a theoretical level. this enables the individual to better understand the underlying processes and to develop a greater understanding and appreciation of the professions unique contribution to the health care field [13].

In order to reach a level of competency the individuals must go through each of these development stages. This model is particularly relevant for professionals facing boundary issues. The professional may be able to perform certain task, but an underlying understanding of the importance of those task is fundamental to the provision of quality services. It is what distinguishes the gaining of a skill and gaining competency in a given area.

Finally, the model takes into account the attitude of the individual. In order to be a positive growing experience the professional needs to view change and education in a positive manner. The professional who is willing to learn new skills will have a better chance of reaching a level of competence that will allow them to perform at a more optimal level. Those who do not see the need for change may not gain the skills necessary to compete in the health care system. Either way it is the attitude of the professional that guides the learning processes and either stifles the individual or leads to greater understanding and appreciation for one's own abilities [13].

Advantages and Disadvantages for Multi-Competencies

As with all change, there will be advantages and disadvantages. Although professionals in the field may
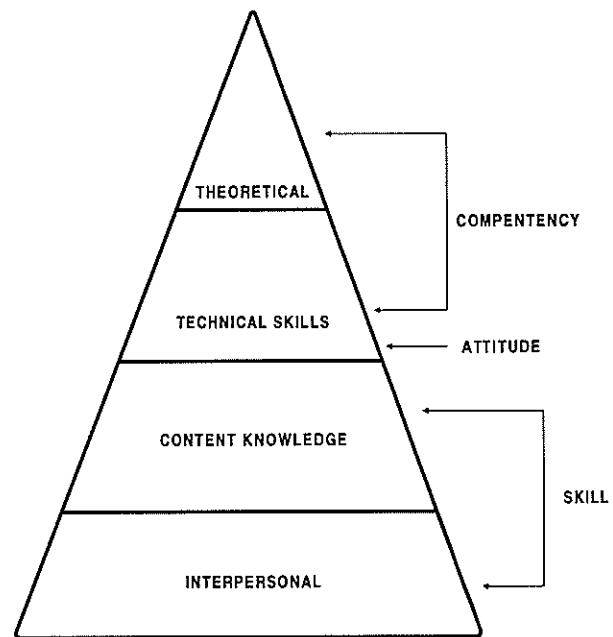

Figure 1. Elements of the Path to Competencies

not have a choice, but to gain multicompetencies, it is still crucial to examine how this will affect the individual and the field, from both the positive and negative perspective.

Disadvantages

There are several disadvantages to cross-training staff in the healthcare field. Perry [14] discussed several of these in an article about skill acquisition within the health care setting. Perry states "Cross -training increases costs and erodes the quality of clinical care because workers lose a measure of expertise.." (p.28). The article discusses in detail the lose of quality services due to generalizing of job functions. It states that without experts performance of certain tasks will become less efficient and cause the quality of patient care to decline. It expresses concern over miss-managed care and lack of flow in service provision.

In addition, the article states that this is just another measure that large hospitals are taking to force employees to do more with less. It is demanding on the employee and creates greater opportunities for mistakes and employee job dissatisfaction. Perhaps the greatest argument is in terms of licenser and certification. With systems already in place to license and certify certain professionals, cross training employees in deferent areas begins to erode these lines. With this new change on the forefront many decisions need to be made in terms of specific task that employees can perform that do not violate licenser or certification guidelines. Many agencies and

accrediting institutions will need to re-evaluate their competency levels and perhaps begin to explore avenues for alternative paths to licenser and certification. For many disciplines this will be a hard struggle. Many professions are just on the horizon of being accepted as legitimate. This makes giving up what little recognition has been gained much more difficult. It also chips away at the quality of care that many clients will receive.

In addition, the increase in given task for employees can lead to increased levels of burn-out. With an already demanding job, many workers feel that added responsibilities are almost a slap in the face. It means learning new skills in the midst of trying to perform all of their other duties. It creates an atmosphere of anger at the agency and the health care system. In the pressure cooker atmosphere many employees will find it difficult to cope with added responsibilities [15].

Another disadvantage is the lack of trained specialist to disseminate needed information. Without trained experts in a given area, it may become more difficult to collect information and pass off that information as needed to meet patient needs. Related to this is the idea of generalized treatment approaches. Generalist can lead to the complete standardization of treatment practices that negligent the humanistic aspect of treatment and education. Experts in a given area can assist in keeping treatment from becoming to standard and can provide needed information to create better treatment and prevention strategies.

Finally, the issue of medical malpractice insurance must be addressed. With professionals assuming more responsibilities, there need to be increased coverage of malpractice insurance. Employers need to be more aware of this potential problem and address this complicated issue. The most important aspect is who will pay for the added insurance- the employer or the employee? The agency should evaluate it's cross training practices to ensure that individuals are properly covered for the tasks they are being asked to perform. Without careful evaluation of this many employees many be performing tasks for which they are not covered. This can lead o severe problem for both the employer and employee.

Advantages

Although there are several inherent disadvantages with multi-competencies there also several advantages that need to be addressed. First, proponents argue that the benefits include; increased productivity, shifting of staff to support growth, improved customer service, increased employee morale, increased flexibility, and the creating of a learning organization [16]. According to Leshner and Browne [16] companies that utilize multicompetent employees can

attain a 20% average increase in productivity and a 30% improvement in customer service. In addition, employees can concentrate more efforts on promoting future growth and continued quality improvement. Finally, this system enables the individual to accept change on a more concrete level and to respond to change a more rapid rate.

Sherer [9] points out that individuals with multi-competency skills are in a better position to foster some job security. She states that, " Although there are no surefire ways to guarantee job security today, there are methods for "managing" a career and progressing through tomorrow" (p.48). The article goes on to describe several methods professionals can undertake to ensure job security. All of the suggestions revolve around building skills in many different areas and applying these skills in the work force. The article suggests that to be marketable, the employee must be willing to be flexible, learn new skills and respond positively to changes within the work force system. In short, the employee must take advantage of every opportunity to learn knew skills and develop professionally.

A major advantage of the multi-competent emphasis is it's impact in the rural health care community. With individuals acquiring more skills agencies in rural areas are able to offer more services and better meet the demands of the individuals in that community [17]. With individual trained in many different areas many community service providers can now offer a wider range of services. This is particularly true for rural mental health centers. Many of these service providers have limited access to employees who were capable of establishing diverse programming. however, with increased qualifications more can be done to meet the individuals mental health needs. In this case, health care reform will act as a catalyst by providing opportunities to better meet the needs of mentally ill persons in rural areas.

As seen form the above there are both advantages and disadvantages to this system. However, before judgments are made regarding advantage or disadvantage one needs weigh this process in terms of the areas of service provision, geographical location, willingness of staff to develop new skills and the ability of the agency to provide training for staff. Only when the whole picture is seen and analyzed can one make either negative or positive comments regarding the development of multi-competent professionals within the health care field.

Challenges for the 21st Century Health Professionals

New knowledge and technologies will change health professional's role, as well how and when they care for their patients [18]. Examine the future requires emphasizing a new set of skills and competencies for most

health professionals and it demands an optimistic viewpoint. Much can be learned about the future from examining the present. Health professionals will be screened and trained so that they are all good role models. Moreover, health professionals will have a solid background in the natural sciences, the social sciences, technical sciences and learning theories. They will have specialized training in two core disciplines: economics and politics. They will also be experts in resource acquisition and management and in the ability to recognize and use power.

The rate of change is increasing rapidly as the 21st century nears. Technological developments is one of the area where the rate of change occurs more rapid. And in no area of technological development are changes more quickly than in the area of electronic media. Technology does not make things happen: people do. Health professionals who do will become computer literate and will be in the position to make a major impact on their professions.

Universities responsible for the preparation of health professionals and hospitals need to reflect in their goals the changes that health care reform is introducing and need to design a working plan that face those challenges. The universities and educational institutions will continue to rethink, redefine, and reshape their basic mission in light of the changes that are occurring in our society. Edginton, Davis III & Hensley [10] state that one of the things to be considered is the necessity accepting the possibilities inherent in our emerging technologies and accelerating the transition to high-technology, information-based society. We live in a new era. It is an era that is punctuated with rapid change, use of technology, cultural diversity, and basic redefinition of our work and play lives. Therefore, universities and institutions responsible for the preparation of health professionals should be kept informed regarding to the trends and demands of the health care reform so that they may prepare the appropriate programs, offerings and services.

The new age of health care, marked by shrinking operational revenues in the face of increased service demand, makes for a challenging command for any health care provider [19]. Today, the differences in human resource issues related to the provision of health services is generally presented by contrasting care in urban versu rural areas has been recognized. Merwin,

Goldsmith and Manderscheid [17] mention three areas that are possible to guide human resource development in the future and can be transfer to any discussion of health care reform including:

    1. retraining the present workforce to develop skills and competencies necessary to work in any community,

    2. integrating the roles of specialty and non-specialist health professionals in theprovision of health services,

    3. incorporating the provision of health services within expanding alternative (medicine) models.

The future health system will be more oriented to health. It will stress health promotion and disease prevention, as well as individual responsibility for health-related behaviors [4]. Therefore, health promotion and disease prevention should become an essential ingredient combined with curative medicine to create a comprehensive health care system [20]. But the movement toward prevention dictates that the treatment of less ill patients take place in more cost-efficient ambulatory settings. Workers, in turn, will have to be multiskilled and flexible in their ability to provide care efficiently across a variety of settings. Rather than doctors, and administrators telling people what to do, they will work with a team to meet the needs of patients, to reduce expenses, and to take care of community health needs. Therefore, the heath care reform movement increased the recognition that health is influenced by biological, psychological, and social factors reframe the importance of multidisciplinary teams to work with the needs of our nation.

Resumen

El siglo 21 trae nuevos retos a las instituciones acadé micas y hospitalarias responsable de la formación de los profesionales de la salud. Estas instituciones necesitan responder en forma efectiva a las demandas existentes del mercado de empleo de los sistemas de salud. Dichas demandas responden a los planteamientos presentado en la reforma de salud la cual esta dirigida a garantizar la calidad de servicios a ofrecerse a la comunidad. Los cambios en el sistema de salud responden a la reforma y los mismos presentan implicaciones importante para la accesibilidad, calidad, preparación y la organización del personal que ofrece los servicios de salud. El profesional de la salud del futuro trabajara en un cambio de enfoque de intervención generalista a uno de especialista y esto exige el poseer unas multicompetencias. Este nuevo personal tiene el reto de enfrentarse a los nuevos adelantos de la tecnología, funciones, y enfoques de la medicina - más preventiva que curativa-para el desempeño de sus tareas. Ya no será solamente la responsabilidad del médico el de diagnosticar y prescribir al paciente, sino que será tarea compartida por la enfermera al igual que los paramédicos. Así que el profesional de la salud tiene que estar a la vanguardia y no quedarse rezagado a los nuevos cambios dentro de los sistemas de salud, medicina y a la

población que tiene que atender. El éxito del profesional de la salud del futuro estará basado en sus multicompetencias como herramientas para el desempeño de su trabajo

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