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<p>Occupational Therapy New Zealand Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa (OTNZ-WNA)</p> <h2 style="color: #0056b3;">Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice</h2>	 <p>OTNZ - WNA Occupational Therapy New Zealand Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa</p>
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Issue:

The World Health Organisation (WHO) identified that collaborative practice *“happens when multiple health workers from different professional backgrounds work together with patients, families, carers and communities to deliver the highest quality of care. It allows health workers to engage any individual whose skills can help achieve local health goals”* (2010, p.7)

In an environment where we are faced with human resource shortages, concerns about patient safety, and the increasingly complex needs of the population, we must be able to work together in a collaborative & interprofessional way in order to ensure consistent, continuous, and reliable care (Bainbridge, Nasmith, Orchard, & Wood, 2010).

The World Health Organisation, (2010), advocates for a ‘collaborative practice ready’ health workforce which they define as *“... someone who has learned how to work in an interprofessional team and is competent to do so”* (p.7). They also state that an essential step in developing a ‘practice ready’ workforce is interprofessional education which enables effective collaboration and improves health outcomes. This can be defined as occurring when two or more people from different professions learn with, from and about each other.

Collaborative practice goes hand in hand with effective interprofessional education. Providing an educational structure from which students and practitioners can develop an interprofessional world view is important in order to ensure optimal interprofessional learning occurs. Orchard (2010) summarises the findings from a number of authors which suggests that myths and inaccuracies about other professions persist in the minds of students and are carried through into professional practice if they are not corrected early on in educational programmes. Other consequences of this narrowing of perspectives include interprofessional communication difficulties or misunderstandings (Charles, Bainbridge, & Gilbert, 2010). This suggests that the provision of relevant, meaningful and timely education is required in order to ensure that students are

exposed to other professional's worldviews, and that there are opportunities to critically reflect on and challenge one's own attitudes and beliefs and the attitudes and beliefs of others (Reid & Flood in Press).

Despite the recognition that interprofessional collaborative practice strengthens health systems and improves health outcomes, the majority of health professionals, including occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau, in Aotearoa New Zealand will not have had access to interprofessional learning opportunities in their pre-registration education programmes. Most health professionals have been, and still are educated separately. They have learned how to work alongside each other in multidisciplinary teams (MDT), where health professionals representing different health and social care professions - **may** work closely with one another, but may not necessarily interact, collaborate or communicate effectively (Atwal & Caldwell, 2006). A shift from multidisciplinary ways of working to more collaborative models, where all practitioners come together with a client and develop a shared plan of care is required for effective interprofessional collaborative practice.

The Canadian Interprofessional Health Collaborative (CIHC), have developed a competency framework for interprofessional collaboration. The CIHC identified several interprofessional collaborative competencies which are the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours required to be successful and capable practitioners. The framework aims to:

- Provide a clear understanding of the characteristics required for effective collaborative practice,
- Inform interprofessional education and
- Inform collaborative practice.

The competency domains include patient/client/family/community-centred care; team functioning; role clarification; interprofessional communication; collaborative leadership; and dealing with interprofessional conflict (CIHC, 2010).

OTNZ-WNA Position

Occupational Therapy New Zealand Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa (OTNZ-WNA) supports the World Health Organisations call for interprofessional education and collaborative practice and advocates for occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau to be leaders and integral members of interprofessional collaborative models of care.

Background

Purpose: This position statement has been developed to inform key stakeholders (occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau, health and disability service providers, consumers, health professionals, health funders, planners, tertiary education providers and policy makers) of the importance of interprofessional collaboration and the role of occupational therapy/whakaora ngangahau in promoting and sustaining interprofessional ways of working.

Development: This position statement was developed in consultation with occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau with experience and /or an interest in occupational therapy/ whakaora ngangahau and interprofessional collaborative practice. National and international literature was reviewed during this process.

Context: This document is intended to be read in conjunction with:

- The Primary Health Care Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2001)
- Framework for action on interprofessional education and collaborative practice (World Health Organisation, 2010)

Occupational Therapy and Interprofessional Collaborative Practice

To be an effective interprofessional practitioner it is essential to adopt the values that encourage and foster interprofessional collaboration (Reid & Flood in Press). Occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau have a unique view of the world which considers the dynamic interrelationship between the person, their environment and the things they do. This provides a sound platform to not only effectively engage with clients, but also other professions and agencies. Occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau have skills, knowledge and attitudes which are aligned to the CICH interprofessional competencies.

Occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau:

Patient/client/family/community-centred care:

- Seek out and integrate clients/ tangata whaiora or whānau, in planning, implementing and evaluating their service/care

Team functioning:

- Participate across teams and in inter-agency working to ensure integrated service delivery
- Share experiences and serve as mentors to others by exploring and seizing opportunities to participate collaboratively

Role clarification:

- Advocate for the role of occupational therapy/ist as a key contributing member of interprofessional collaborative practice
- Develop an understanding of and respect for the role and contributions of health and human service professionals from different backgrounds and work together with clients/ tangata whaiora or whānau, to deliver high quality care

Interprofessional communication:

- Communicate in a sensitive and professional manner demonstrating a willingness to work in partnership
- Develop effective relationships and trust with clients/ tangata whaiora or whānau, and other team members

Collaborative leadership:

- Facilitate effective relationships and decision making
- Evaluate and share best practice

Dealing with interprofessional conflict:

- Understand and use of the environment to create 'safe' places in which to express diverse opinions.
- Use effective strategies and work constructively with others to address and resolve potential conflicts

Education

Interprofessional education enables students and practitioners to develop competencies in the form of knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours enabling them to work collaboratively in practice. A “collaborative practice-ready” occupational therapist/kaiwhakaora ngangahau has learned how to work as part of an interprofessional team and is competent to do so. (WHO, 2010).

To ensure occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau participate in interprofessional education and engage in collaborative practice, OTNZ-WNA recommends the following:

- Interprofessional education and the philosophy of interprofessional collaborative practice is a major focus at entry level to the profession
- Professional development and post-graduate learning opportunities that enhance, develop and promote interprofessional collaborative practice are advocated for

Research

To ensure occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau have a current evidence-based approach to interprofessional collaborative practice, OTNZ-WNA recommends that further research focuses on the following:

- Gain a better understanding of the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours that occupational therapists/nga kaiwhakaora ngangahau have that contribute to effective collaborative practice.
- The impact of interprofessional collaborative practice on the health outcomes of clients
- Further information on effective models of interprofessional education and how these can be applied within the New Zealand context
- Opportunities to share innovative interprofessional collaborative practice are developed and supported

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