Director’s Message

Interdependence is both terrifying and necessary. After learning and working for years to become independent – as an adult separate from my parents, as a physician separate from my clinical teachers, and as a faculty member separate from my mentors – I’m starting to come around to the idea that interdependence is a necessary condition of modern life. We need each other, not just as clinicians or colleagues, but as human beings who depend on each other to tackle the challenges on the meandering road of life.

This message was brought home in the plenary sessions of the Emshwiller Symposium during which Bonnie Jennings described the necessity of interdependence for teams to function optimally. We also see it in how we need to work together to overcome the opioid epidemic or improve quality in our healthcare system. The truth is interdependence is required for any great accomplishment in the complex environments of modern society. We need diversity of perspective and we need relationships that support free exchange of ideas. So, buckle up, and let’s get to work on the challenges on the road ahead. I’m glad to have you along for the ride.

Alan Dow, MD, MSHA is the Assistant Vice President for Health Sciences for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care, and Professor of Internal Medicine in the VCU School of Medicine.

News and Notes

• The Certificate in Care Coordination is a 15-credit post-baccalaureate graduate certificate program enrolling one cohort of 20 students annually starting in Fall 2017. Now accepting applications. go.vcu.edu/carecoordination

• Congratulations to the local CLARION Competition winners: Jessica Nguyen, Biomedical Engineering; Bijal Rajput, Biology; Gurbian Jolly, Psychology; Matthew Nguyen, Chemistry.

• Congratulations to the 2017 Emshwiller Poster Winners: Rose Kohinke, The Inter Health Alliance: A Roadmap for Transition, Implementation, and Future Directions; Danah Alsane - Exploring Predictors of Teamwork Performance in an Interprofessional Quality Improvement and Patient Safety Course for Early Learners.

• The Sixth Annual Emshwiller Interprofessional Symposium: Collaborating to Close the Gaps will take place on Saturday, February 3, 2018. Program from 9:00am – 4:00pm at Wyndham Virginia Crossings, Glen Allen, VA. More information about call for abstracts and event details to follow in Summer 2017. go.vcu.edu/ipeconference

Pivoting the Team to the Challenge of Opiate Misuse

Last year, the United States Surgeon General declared substance abuse a public health crisis. Likewise, at the end of last year, the Virginia Department of Health named the opiate epidemic a public health emergency. With increasing amounts of opiate misuse and dramatically rising number of deaths from opiate overdoses, identification of opiate misuse and safe opiate prescribing are urgent goals for healthcare practitioners.

To meet these goals and in accordance with new continuing education requirements from the Board of Health Professions, faculty supported by the Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care are launching a web-based course on safe opiate prescribing. The faculty – Omar Abubaker, DMD, PhD from dentistry, Sebastian Tong, MD, MPH from family medicine, and Megan Lemay, Pablo Bedoya, and Alan Dow from internal medicine – have developed content focused on describing the extent and demographics of the opioid epidemic, the biological basis of addiction, guidance from the Centers for Disease Control around safe opiate prescribing, and advice on how to identify and refer patients with possible opiate misuse. The content is being produced by the Center and includes a mix of videos, interactive questions, and text.

“We want this to be practical,” noted Alan Dow. “So often, when we educate practitioners, we don’t give them usable information that can be applied in practice. But, in this course, we are really focusing on how the whole team can work together to combat opiate misuse.”

The course was also designed to help prescribers meet new regulations from state licensing boards. “Because so many practitioners need content like this, it’s a great way to encourage them to start thinking about how the broader healthcare team can start to tackle challenging problems like safe opiate prescribing,” said Dow. “We hope that practitioners see it takes an ‘all hands on deck’ approach to overcome the challenge of opiate misuse.”

The course will be launched in Spring 2017. For more details contact the course, contact Alan Dow at alan.dow@vcuhealth.org.
Five Years of Working and Learning Together

More than 130 educators, researchers, practitioners, trainees and students gathered to learn from each other about interprofessional education and practice at the Fifth Annual Emswiler Interprofessional Symposium on February 4. Disciplines represented were architecture, allied health professions, dentistry, medicine, nursing, pharmacy, psychology, social work, and veterinary medicine. Keynote addresses followed with multiple perspectives on teamwork in healthcare. Jennings drew from the business literature as well as history to provide new context for how educators and practitioners should be thinking about teamwork in healthcare. Davis illustrated a practical clinical angle of enhancing teamwork across a large and complex clinical enterprise to improve patient outcomes and practitioner well-being.

Two dozen posters from as many mid-Atlantic institutions outlined cutting-edge projects exploring new directions in interprofessional education and practice. Three afternoon tracks were available to attendees: education- or practice-based oral presentations, or a workshop led by led by Todd Savitt from East Carolina University on reader’s theater, an innovative approach which considered clinician burnout and the demands of caring for the underserved.

The Symposium capped off with an emerging leader panel with six junior faculty and students. Speakers were nominated by their respective institution for their personal commitment to interprofessional excellence. Overall, the day was a compelling and engaging. More than 96% of attendees said they would recommend the event to peers.

The Sixth Annual Emswiler Interprofessional Symposium: Collaborating to Close Gaps will take place on Saturday, February 3, 2018. Program from 9:00am - 4:00pm at Wyndham Virginia Crossings, Glen Allen, VA. More information about call for abstracts and event details to follow in Summer 2017.

Spotlight on Marianne Baernholdt

Marianne Baernholdt, PhD, MPH, RN, FAAN is the founding Director of the Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation and the Nursing Alumni Endowed Distinguished Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing. Baernholdt has a broad background in research, clinical practice, and education. Baernholdt’s research focuses on how quality of care is defined and the factors affecting quality of care in rural areas. Her current work includes “Care Interventions and Quality of Care in Rural and Urban Nursing Units,” a study funded by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality in which she compares fall and pressure ulcer interventions and rates. As an educator, she has developed courses and has been part of training grants focusing on quality and safety, as well as served as mentor for students and researchers from several countries. Currently, she is the lead faculty for the School of Nursing’s new PhD tract in Healthcare Quality Research. She teaches courses in leadership, quality and safety, and health services research. She also serves on several national and international committees and is currently co-chair for the American Academy of Nursing’s expert panel on Quality Health Care and the U.S. representative on the International Council of Nurses’ steering committee for Rural and Remote Nursing.

Baernholdt received her undergraduate degree from Bespieberg School of Nursing in Copenhagen, Denmark, her bachelor’s in nursing from Pace University in New York, master’s degrees in public health and critical care nursing from Columbia University and her PH.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. She was a post-doctoral fellow at University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill’s School of Nursing. Prior to her current position she was on faculty at University of Virginia School of Nursing for 3 years. Both at UVA and at VCU, she is involved in Interprofessional Practice and Education training, projects, and programs involving students and health care providers.

The Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation

The Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation at Virginia Commonwealth University was conceived with a mandate to bring outside-the-box thinking to improve quality and safety across the health care continuum. The Center is dedicated to fostering new discoveries, providing educational opportunities, and supporting and disseminating innovations that fosters collaborative patient-centered cost-effective health care. The Center hosts regular activities throughout the year, include annual symposia, Langston Center Lectures, regular meetings of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement RIVA Chapter. In addition, the Center provides quality safety or quality improvement research consultations to individuals and groups.

The Langston Quality Scholars Program is a ten-month experiential learning program for clinical teams training in leadership, organization, and performance improvement while solving an actual quality and safety problem in their clinical setting. The first cohort of 16 scholars successfully completed the program in December 2016. Amy Dean, M.S., R.N., CCRN, Langston Quality Scholar, stated “I feel fortunate to learn the skills needed to make a change in our patient safety environment. It is an honor to be in this first cohort”. January 2017 started the second cohort with 26 VCU Health System health care practitioners. Enrolment for the third cohort will begin in Fall 2017.

Working Together for Better Health

With a focus on quality and safety, Virginia Commonwealth University is leading the quest for better healthcare. In 1999, the Institute of Medicine’s report, To Err is Human, propelled concerns about patient safety into public prominence and launched a continued quest to improve the quality of health care. In a subsequent report, Crossing the Quality Chasm, the Institute noted that quality is a property of the health system. The committee therefore recommended the now well-known aims for improving health care systems—care that is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable. In 2008, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement suggested optimizing the performance of health care systems through implementing a framework known as the Triple Aim—enhancing the patient experience, improving population health, and reducing health care costs. The Triple Aim was expanded to a Quadruple Aim in 2014, based on the premise that improving the work life of health care clinicians and staff was a necessary ingredient to achieving the other three aims. Virginia Commonwealth University has taken the quest for quality seriously as exemplified in winning the American Hospital Association-McKesson Quest for Quality Prize in 2014. Such recognition not only fuels the continued quest for quality but it also energizes new strategies for the future.

Two such strategies that serve as national models for improving health care are The Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care, founded in 2011, and The Langston Center for Quality, Safety, and Innovation, founded in 2015. Individually, these Centers support innovations to achieve the six aims, the Triple Aim, and the Quadruple Aim. Together, these Centers afford a rare opportunity for health care professionals to learn together. The Emswiler Interprofessional Symposium is one example of how the Center for Interprofessional Education creates a forum in which professionals from diverse health care disciplines learn about, from, and with each other so they might work better together and improve patient outcomes. The Langston Quality Scholars program is another example of how teams of clinicians are afforded a unique opportunity to learn together while also improving patient safety. The reciprocity in these two Centers creates a hotbed of possibility. These two Centers share the quest for quality care as their common thread, creating a bond that strengthens them individually as well as their shared journey and goal. These two Centers are shrinking the quality chasm as they show ways to create enhanced health care in the 21st century.

The Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation

The Langston Center for Quality, Safety and Innovation at Virginia Commonwealth University is dedicated to bringing out-of-the-box thinking to improve quality and safety across the health care continuum. The Center is dedicated to fostering new discoveries, providing educational opportunities, and supporting and disseminating innovations that promote collaborative, patient-centered, cost-effective health care. The Center hosts regular activities throughout the year, including annual symposia, Langston Center Lectures, regular meetings of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement RIVA Chapter. In addition, the Center provides quality safety or quality improvement research consultations to individuals and groups.

The Langston Quality Scholars Program is a ten-month experiential learning program for clinical teams training in leadership, organization, and performance improvement while solving an actual quality and safety problem in their clinical setting. The first cohort of 16 scholars successfully completed the program in December 2016. Amy Dean, M.S., R.N., CCRN, Langston Quality Scholar, stated, “I feel fortunate to learn the skills needed to make a change in our patient safety environment. It is an honor to be in this first cohort.” January 2017 started the second cohort with 26 VCU Health System health care practitioners. Enrollment for the third cohort will begin in Fall 2017.

Working Together for Better Health

With a focus on quality and safety, Virginia Commonwealth University is leading the quest for better healthcare. In 1999, the Institute of Medicine’s report, To Err is Human, propelled concerns about patient safety into public prominence and launched a continued quest to improve the quality of health care. In a subsequent report, Crossing the Quality Chasm, the Institute noted that quality is a property of the health system. The committee therefore recommended the now well-known aims for improving health care systems—care that is safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable. In 2008, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement suggested optimizing the performance of health care systems through implementing a framework known as the Triple Aim—enhancing the patient experience, improving population health, and reducing health care costs. The Triple Aim was expanded to a Quadruple Aim in 2014, based on the premise that improving the work life of health care clinicians and staff was a necessary ingredient to achieving the other three aims. Virginia Commonwealth University has taken the quest for quality seriously as exemplified in winning the American Hospital Association-McKesson Quest for Quality Prize in 2014. Such recognition not only fuels the continued quest for quality but it also energizes new strategies for the future.

Two such strategies that serve as national models for improving health care are The Center for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Care, founded in 2011, and The Langston Center for Quality, Safety, and Innovation, founded in 2015. Individually, these Centers support innovations to achieve the six aims, the Triple Aim, and the Quadruple Aim. Together, these Centers afford a rare opportunity for health care professionals to learn together. The Emswiler Interprofessional Symposium is one example of how the Center for Interprofessional Education creates a forum in which professionals from diverse health care disciplines learn about, from, and with each other so they might work better together and improve patient outcomes. The Langston Quality Scholars program is another example of how teams of clinicians are afforded a unique opportunity to learn together while also improving patient safety. The reciprocity in these two Centers creates a hotbed of possibility. These two Centers share the quest for quality care as their common thread, creating a bond that strengthens them individually as well as their shared journey and goal. These two Centers are shrinking the quality chasm as they show ways to create enhanced health care in the 21st century.