

Physical therapy and nursing students share insights on best practices, interventions in cadaver

Students in Oakland University's School of Health Sciences and School of Nursing recently came together to share their knowledge with the goal of delivering the best possible care to patients with joint disorders.

The two groups, comprised of junior-year undergraduate nursing students and third-year Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) students, gathered in Hannah Hall's Gross Anatomy Lab, where they utilized human cadavers to learn more about the nature and treatment of joint disorders such as arthritis, torn ligaments and disc degeneration.

In a series of 20-minute rotations, DPT students and nursing students examined different sections of the human body – foot/ankle, arm/shoulder, leg/hip, upper back/neck and lower back – for signs of joint problems, including degenerated discs, torn ligaments, and hip and knee replacements.

The DPT students shared their knowledge about anatomy and joint function, identifying various injuries on the cadavers. They also offered perspectives on interventions that physical therapists use to treat patients with joint-related injuries and complications. The nursing students, in turn, shared their knowledge about interventions that nurses use to relieve patients' joint pain. Much of the discussion centered on how nurses and physical therapists can work together to improve health outcomes for patients in clinics and hospitals.

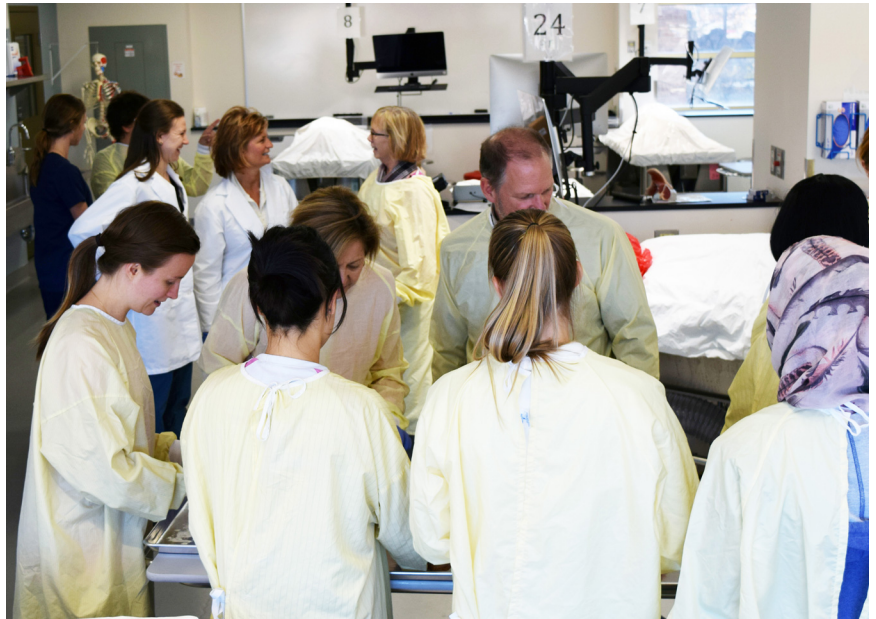
This was the first time that students from nursing and physical therapy came together as part of an Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC). An IPEC provides opportunities for individuals from different professions to develop a better understanding of what each profession does and how the professions can complement each other when delivering care.

In particular, the student-to-student interaction helps future physical therapists and nurses be better prepared to work together in clinical and hospital settings, according to Doug Creighton, instructor of the PT 761 Arthology class that hosted the IPEC.

"It helps them be more respectful of each other's profession and understand their knowledge bases," said Dr. Creighton, associate professor of physical therapy. "They learn to value each other more."

He noted that, for example, physical therapists tend to have a more extensive background in anatomy, while nurses focus more on medications and pharmacology.

Ellen Gajewski, instructor of the NRS 336 Nursing Care of Adults class that the nursing students came from, said that the IPEC experience helps the two groups not only expand their knowledge, but also



As part of an Interprofessional Education Collaborative, students, faculty and leaders from OU's health sciences and nursing schools visited the Gross Anatomy Lab in Hannah Hall to learn about various treatments for joint-related injuries.



Doctor of Physical Therapy students Noha Elghoroury (left) and Alison Davis examine a cadaver in OU's Gross Anatomy Lab.

“Nurses and physical therapists need to be comfortable talking to each other,” Gajewski explained. “It’s much more effective to talk to someone, rather than just leaving a note. Coming together and having that personal interaction – discussing treatment plans and other concerns – helps everyone provide the best care, which is the overall goal.”

During the rotations, the students discussed ways that physical therapists and nurses collaborate on patient care, such as ordering pain medications and paying close attention to when medications are administered. While medications can be useful in alleviating pain, side effects are also a concern, said DPT student Jonathan Miller.

“If a medication is known to cause dizziness, then it becomes a safety issue for patients during therapy,” he said. “We don’t want them to fall and hurt themselves.”

Nursing student Cathlin Michels said that working with the DPT students gave her a better understanding of anatomy and how the human body works.

“We’ve never seen anything like this before,” she said. “It helps to actually see how everything works, rather than just reading about it in a textbook. This felt more like real-world experience.”



Drawing on their respective backgrounds, students from OU's physical therapy and nursing programs shared perspectives on how to work together to provide the best care for patients.