



MISSISSIPPI STATE  
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EXTENSION



# Interprofessional Aspects of Healthcare

## *A Web of Connections Activity*

### Introduction to the Web of Connections

This activity enables participants to recognize the interconnectedness of their professions and communities and the vital roles they each play in addressing key issues.

Groups and teams benefit from a variety of perspectives and insights. When each group member brings experiences and expertise to their group, the whole group or team emerges with a more complete and robust result or solution. This **multidisciplinary** approach helps groups solve problems in a more holistic and comprehensive way.

The Web of Connections exercise is designed to help participants better understand and visualize the relationships between their different areas of experience and expertise as it relates to their group or team's purpose. This Web of Connections activity, regardless of the issue being addressed or the nature of the group, is a great way to get the creative and innovative juices flowing! This activity is suitable for groups 12 years of age and older.

### Materials Needed

- A ball of yarn
- Scissors
- Signs/objects that represent academic disciplines, professions, social issues, resources, parts of systems, etc. (See table on pages 3-5.)
- Space for participants to sit or stand in a circle

### Instructions

- ✓ The facilitator will explain to participants the focus of the activity. Participants should collaborate and think critically on how the components or roles relate to each other.
- ✓ Form a circle so participants are facing one another.
- ✓ Give each individual one of the signs or objects that symbolize the perspective or issue they are to represent in the activity. This activity is ideal for groups of 12 but can be adapted for smaller or larger groups. If the group size is larger than the number of roles, have participants work in groups; if it is smaller, eliminate roles or have individuals play more than one role.
- ✓ Any participant can begin making connections; however, the facilitator may want to start to demonstrate how the activity should work.

- ✓ The first person or group will start with the ball of yarn and explain to everyone the details of their assigned component/role (represented by the sign or object).
- ✓ While holding onto the string, the first person will pass the ball of yarn to another person or group with a sign or object.
- ✓ The next person or group then will explain the details of their topic, as well as how theirs is *connected* to the group before them. The first connection of the web is now made.
- ✓ Continue to pass the ball of yarn until everyone has presented their connection, and then cut the string.

*\*Note that participants can mention how their topic relates to several of the previously presented ones. For instance, the fourth component/role can be connected with the third, second, or first.*

- ✓ Lastly, the audience may take the time to discuss the connection made during the activity. A few examples of discussion questions include:
  1. What other connections are possible that have not been made?
  2. What connections were the most obvious?
  3. What connections surprised you?
  4. How does this exercise influence your feelings about \_\_\_\_\_?
  5. Which additional roles or issues could be added to the web?
  6. Do you feel like more can be accomplished when groups/interdisciplinary teams are formed? Why or why not?
  7. How can the connections represented here today help solve problems? Could they complicate issues even further?
  8. How can you use what you learned during this activity?



## *Want to expand this activity and make it a multisession set of experiences?*

If time permits, students can apply this activity to another specific topic area they are studying. Students may research components and/or professions within that area, and then lead their own Web of Connections activity. Another way to expand this activity is to host a follow-up discussion panel featuring professionals within the field. These additional activities can help students think more independently and gain a deeper perspective of the topic.

To help you facilitate your own Web of Connections activity, we have provided examples for the following topics:

- Community Organizing (MSU Extension Publication 3093)
- Global and Domestic Issues with Hunger (MSU Extension Publication 3136)
- Interprofessional Aspects of Healthcare (MSU Extension Publication 3137)

Each Web of Connections activity also includes an evaluation form for facilitators to obtain participants' feedback.

### **Interprofessional Aspects of Healthcare**

Healthcare involves different types of professionals who are highly educated and trained in their respective areas of expertise. Healthcare requires interprofessional collaboration in order to most efficiently and effectively address patients' and clients' health needs. You may find healthcare teams in clinical settings—such as primary care offices, rehabilitation units, and surgical centers—but also in long-term care settings, community-based health settings, and social-service settings. Teams like

these ensure a patient's biological, psychological, and social needs all are taken into consideration for more comprehensive care. Patients aren't the only ones who benefit from interprofessional healthcare; providers and the healthcare system as a whole benefit because of increased access to services; lower healthcare expenditures; and coordination, communication, and teamwork among healthcare professionals. Here are several professions and their roles within the healthcare system.

Healthcare Professional	Focus
Physician (MD/DO)	Physicians examine patients; obtain medical histories; order, perform, and interpret diagnostic tests; and prescribe and administer treatment for people suffering from injury or disease. They counsel patients about illness, injuries, health conditions, and preventive healthcare (diet/fitness, smoking cessation, etc.). They can also conduct medical research, teach, and run medical centers.

Healthcare Professional	Focus
Health Educator (CHES)	<p>Health educators may develop community-wide education initiatives on health topics ranging from nutrition and fitness to injury and disease prevention. They may also engage in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helping to stop the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, such as cervical cancer and HIV/AIDS.</li> <li>• helping young people recognize and avoid the dangers of unprotected sex, alcohol abuse, and drug abuse.</li> <li>• reducing obesity and related health problems in youth and adult populations.</li> <li>• improving the quality of life for the growing population of seniors.</li> <li>• investigating and implementing health promotion programs, such as smoking-cessation initiatives, water and sanitation projects, and occupational safety courses.</li> </ul>
Social Worker (LSW, LMSW, LCSW)	<p>A social worker's approach to care is oriented toward solving problems and promoting positive social change. Professional social workers respond to and help prevent crises, and they counsel individuals, families, groups, and communities on how to cope with the stresses of everyday life. They often help people with socioeconomic disadvantages, including severe poverty, unemployment, discrimination, or inadequate housing. They also help people who have serious illnesses, disabilities, or substance abuse problems, as well as families with serious domestic conflicts, sometimes involving child abuse or intimate partner violence.</p>
Psychologist	<p>Psychologists traditionally treat patients with mental and emotional problems, but they also serve as scientists researching the phenomenon of human (and nonhuman) behavior. They study how human beings relate not only to each other but also to machines, and they work to improve these relationships. In particular, they concentrate on behaviors that affect the mental and emotional health and mental functioning of healthy human beings.</p>
Optometrist (OD)	<p>Optometrists diagnose and treat the eyes, prescribe medications, perform certain surgical procedures, provide vision therapy and low-vision rehabilitation, and assist patients with eyeglasses and contact lenses. They counsel patients regarding surgical and non-surgical options to meet their visual needs. ODs also diagnose systemic conditions that have eye-related symptoms (i.e., diabetes or high blood pressure) and refer patients to other health practitioners, as needed.</p>
Nurse Practitioner (NP)	<p>Nurse practitioners are registered nurses with advanced education that prepares them to take on management positions within the field. Nurse practitioners also are qualified to provide basic primary care. An NP, working under the supervision of a physician, can do much of what the physician does. Some NPs with advanced training can prescribe medications and diagnose and treat common acute illnesses and injuries.</p>
Registered Nurse (RN)	<p>Registered nurses provide direct patient care; observe, assess, and record symptoms; administer medications; and assist physicians during treatment and examination. Nurses can specialize in areas such as emergency room, operating room, or pediatric nursing with additional training. RNs must graduate from a nursing program and pass a national licensing examination.</p>
Audiologist and Speech Language Pathologist	<p>Audiologists determine if a person has hearing loss and what type of loss it is. If a person can benefit from using hearing aids or other assistive listening systems, the audiologist can assist with the selection, fitting, and training in their effective use. Speech language pathologists evaluate speech, language, cognitive communication, and swallowing skills of adults and children, and then determine what problems exist and the best treatment. A degree in communication sciences and disorders is required, which may be acquired at the undergraduate or graduate level.</p>

Healthcare Professional	Focus
Registered Dietitian (RD)	Dietitians and nutritionists plan food and nutrition programs and supervise the preparation and serving of meals. They help prevent and treat illnesses by promoting healthy eating habits and suggesting diet modifications. Dietitians run food-service systems for institutions such as hospitals and schools, promote sound eating habits through education, and conduct research. To become an RD, you must complete an undergraduate degree (at minimum) or a 2-year post-baccalaureate degree in dietetics, foods and nutrition, or a related field.
Physical Therapist (PT)	Physical therapists most often work with patients who are recovering from an accident, injury, or ailment (such as a stroke) or who have a disability that affects their strength or mobility. PTs practice in hospitals, clinics, and private offices and consult with other healthcare professionals, including physicians, nurses, educators, and social workers. Some PTs specialize in areas such as sports, pediatric, neurologic, or geriatric physical therapy. Physical therapists in every state must graduate from an accredited physical therapist educational program and be licensed before they can practice.
Occupational Therapist (OT)	Occupational therapists work with people of all ages who have suffered from some type of injury, illness, or other impairment that hinders them from conducting basic work or life tasks. Occupational therapists provide exercises and sometimes orthotic devices to help these patients improve their life and work functioning. Some OTs specialize in areas such as pediatrics, neurology, burns, or geriatrics. Occupational therapists undergo a training program similar to the one physical therapists complete. In order to sit for the national certification exam administered by the American Occupational Therapy Certification Board, a person must have a master's or doctoral degree in occupational therapy.
Pharmacist (RPh, PharmD)	Pharmacists dispense drugs prescribed by physicians and other health practitioners and provide information to patients about medications and their use. They advise physicians and other health practitioners on the selection, dosages, interactions, and side effects of medications. Most pharmacists work in a community setting, such as a retail drug store, or in a hospital or clinic. Pharmacists in community or retail pharmacies counsel patients and answer questions about prescription drugs. They also provide information about over-the-counter drugs. A PharmD (doctor of pharmacy) requires at least 2 years of specific preprofessional (undergraduate) coursework, followed by 4 years of professional study.
Physician Assistant (PA)	A PA always works under a physician's supervision, though in understaffed facilities where a primary-care physician may not be available every day, a PA might handle all the patient care. More often, a PA will interview patients to record their medical histories, give basic physicals, interpret lab results, and make tentative diagnoses to confirm later with a physician. Many PAs also follow up with patients to monitor their reaction to drugs, teach them about nutrition, and consult with their family members. PA is a master's degree program.

### Adapted From

<http://www.apa.org/about/gr/issues/health-care/integrated.aspx>

<http://career.opcd.wfu.edu/explore-careers/allied-health/>

[http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/17/Allopathic\\_Physician\\_MD](http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/17/Allopathic_Physician_MD)

[http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/46/Behavioral\\_ScienceHealth\\_Education](http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/46/Behavioral_ScienceHealth_Education)

<http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/11/Optometrlist>

[http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/116/Social\\_Worker](http://explorehealthcareers.org/en/Career/116/Social_Worker)

# Web of Connections Evaluation Survey

Workshop: *Interprofessional Aspects of Healthcare*

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Group participating in the activity: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your response to each item:

	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Disagree (D)	Neutral (N)	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)
This activity...					
a. related to my needs.					
b. was understandable.					
Participating in this activity was worth my time.					
I would recommend this activity to others.					
My knowledge increased about how people are connected, in general.					
My knowledge increased about how different healthcare fields are connected.					
My understanding of how different healthcare fields can work together to improve patient outcomes has increased.					
I will tell others what I learned through this activity about the interconnectedness of healthcare.					

The most important thing I learned through this activity was:

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One specific thing that I plan to use or apply as a result of this activity is:

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By David Buys, PhD, MSPH, CPH, Assistant Extension/Research Professor and State Health Specialist, Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion; Victorian Tilley, Graduate Assistant, Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion; Brittney Oliver, PhD, Assistant Professor, Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion; and Laura Brumbaugh-Robertson, Extension Agent, Tate County.

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