

About Interprofessional Professionalism

What is Interprofessional Professionalism (IPP)?

The interprofessional professionalism collaborative (IPC) defines IPP as the:

“Consistent demonstration of core values evidenced by professionals working together, aspiring to and wisely applying principles* of, altruism and caring, excellence, ethics, respect, communication, accountability to achieve optimal health and wellness in individuals and communities.”

Each of the principles identified in this definition reflect a common set of core values that transcend all of the health professions represented in the IPC. IPP is central to the IPC’s purpose and vision that connects education and quality care.

*Stern DT. Measuring Medical Professionalism. Oxford University Press. New York, NY; 2006:19.

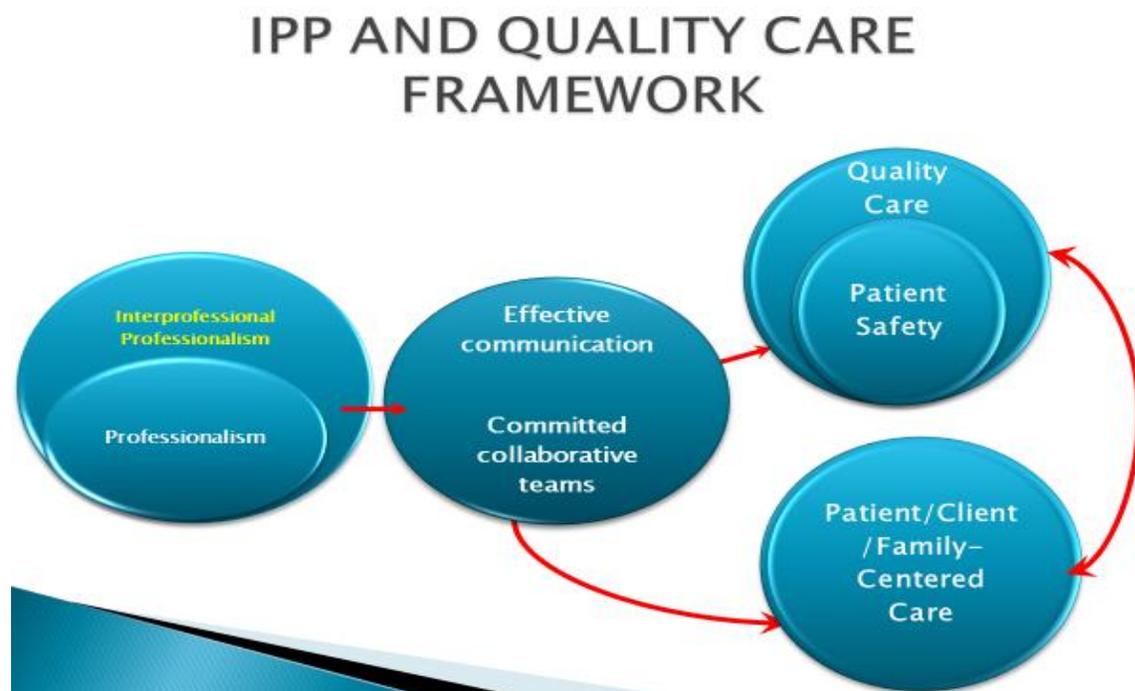
Why interprofessional professionalism (and not interprofessional collaborative practice)?

Both represent important constructs associated with quality care. The IPC chose to focus on interprofessional professionalism after noting that professionalism is often approached from a profession specific focus that does not adequately address professionalism in the context of interacting with other health professionals.

However, defining IPP alone was not sufficient to communicate the construct. IPP behaviors needed to be developed that were both observable and measurable if we were to be able to translate the construct into practice.

How is IPP connected to quality care?

The following depicts the relationship between IPP and quality care as conceptualized by the IPC:



IPP behaviors are intended to guide professions to understand the impact of collaborative teamwork coupled with effective communication that contribute to quality health care and optimal patient/client/family-centered care. The potential for professionalism to contribute to safe, high-quality, patient/client/family-centered care is intimately connected to its ability to support and foster interprofessional care. However, we believe this connection has not been adequately emphasized to date because of the disciplinary insularity that persists in health professions education. Elucidation of the link between professionalism and interprofessional care that is provided in a team context by members of different health professions is an urgent priority.

Professionalism is not an end itself, but supports the ultimate goals of patient/client/family-centered care, quality and patient safety. While broader discussion of professionalism frequently endorse these outcomes, they seldom emphasize cooperation among members of multiple health professions as a mechanism to achieve them. In the context of increasing complexity of care, narrower definitions of professionalism may actually undermine quality and safety by distracting clinicians from the need to collaborate effectively across professions.