

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY



SPOR Evidence Alliance
Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research

Alliance pour des données
probantes de la SRAP
Stratégie de recherche axée sur le patient

Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research



Patient Engagement in Health Education Curriculum

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What does this mean?

While progress has been made, determined effort is necessary to engage patients in the co-design, implementation and evaluation of health education curriculum. Institutions, educators, and policymakers must commit to building inclusive systems that support genuine partnerships with patients. Doing so will better prepare future healthcare professionals to deliver care that is compassionate, equitable, and truly patient-centered.

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Summary

This report explores how patients - people with lived experience of health conditions - are currently included in the education of future healthcare providers because they play a key role in providing patient centered care. However, the necessary values, attitudes, and skills are not consistently taught in undergraduate health education programs. To advance patient centered care in the health system, patients and families must be co-designers and co-educators in health education programs to ensure students learn from patients what is most important to them.

What answers did we find from our research?

There were 138 global studies reviewed that examined how patients are involved in designing, delivering, and evaluating healthcare education. Most patient partners identified in the studies were individual patients. Family members and broader community voices were often missing. Patient engagement typically took place in education programs rather than clinical settings. While patients contributed to developing or updating learning materials, few were involved in long-term planning or decision-making. Most frequently, the examples of engagement were of patients sharing their experiences with students.

What are the barriers and facilitators to patient engagement?

The review identified several barriers to meaningful involvement. These included a lack of understanding about how to engage patients, insufficient support and training for both patients and educators, limited financial resources, and a lack of diversity among patient voices. On the other hand, key supports such as dedicated staff, clear roles, and strong, trusting relationships helped enable effective engagement. Students also reported that learning directly from patients helped them build empathy and a deeper understanding of patient-centered care.