Institute of Medicine (2013) Interprofessional education for collaboration: learning how to improve health from interprofessional models across the continuum of education to practice. Workshop Summary, National Academies Press, Washington DC, 164 pages. Available for download at: http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=13486

Designed to advance the recommendations from the Institute of Medicine (IOM) and Lancet Commission reports on the future of health professions education (Frenk et al., 2010; Institute of Medicine, 2003), the Global Forum on Innovation in Health Professional Education was created by the IOM to bring together global stakeholders and innovators to discuss and evaluate new ideas. Fittingly, interprofessional education was the focus of the first two workshops commissioned by the Forum. Over seven chapters, this report describes the various discussions and debates from these workshops. In addition, the report offers a series of key lessons learned. For example, Paul Worley from Flinders University in Australia recounts the impact of training students in rural Australia. Forced by shortages in the healthcare workforce to collaborate across professions and empowered by an engaged community, Worley and colleagues provided an immersive, transformative one-year experience for students and practitioners that pushed all of them to rethink healthcare teams and to reappraise the value of practicing in rural environments.

Yet, as compelling as the many stories in the report are, several things are missing. While Madeline Schmitt from Rochester University, USA, along with others brought up the important issue of cost in modern healthcare, this theme is missing from the discussion on the evaluation of educational experiences. The workshops correctly emphasized the need for more studies that demonstrate the benefit of interprofessional education to patients and communities, but they did not underscore the critical component of cost in educational planning. Later in the report, the importance of cost resurfaces as the lever that may drive the incorporation of more interprofessional practice. How this focus on cost in the practice environment will shape education in both programs of study and continuing education is a critical question. For the future of interprofessional education, being able to quantify value – benefit divided by cost – is imperative.

The report from these two workshops should also be conceptualized as an important case series. Drawing on several countries and dozens of institution, it documents best practices at the moment. Left unresolved is the direction forward for interprofessional education. The general themes of the sessions – practice and education need to better aligned, breaking down silos requires creative champions – are undoubtedly true. What remain uncertain are what structures and processes are needed to integrate IPE widely and which methods demonstrate the most value across the continuum of education and practice. In future, the Global Forum on Innovation in Health Professional Education may have an opportunity to set a global agenda for research and to catalyze comparative studies that identify the way forward for the next wave of widespread evolution in education and practice.

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Declaration of interest
The author declares no conflicts of interest. The author alone is responsible for the content and writing of the paper.

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