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# Achieving better patient outcomes

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Special to QMI Agency

**B**ecause nurses at long-term care centres often provide oral care, nursing students at George Brown College get lessons from dental health students on proper oral hygiene and technique. Dental health students, in turn, get lessons from nursing students on how to take proper blood pressures.

That's but one example of inter-professional collaboration. An emerging trend in health care, it brings together professionals from different disciplines to treat and care for patients.

The trend guided the development of George Brown's centre for health sciences, which opened its doors two years ago. "The campus was purposely built to foster inter-professional relationships," says Cory Ross, dean of the division of community services and health sciences.

In another example, culinary nutrition students at the college work with personal support worker students to develop recipes for people with diabetes and swallowing disorders.

"It's about creating authentic partnerships and bringing together people who will work together going forward to achieve better patient outcomes," Ross says.

Other trends in health sciences education:

**1** **Simulated learning**  
This trend creates authentic and safe learning environments so students can hit the ground running on clinical placements. At George Brown, simulation suites are used by nursing, dental, fitness and health promotion, and other programs.

Western University is home to a simulated hospital ward with fully computerized mannequins that talk, breathe, have a heartbeat, sweat, urinate, have programmable conditions like bronchitis and pneumonia, and can have babies.

**2** **Inter-disciplinary research**  
Conducting research with medicine students is a natural fit but at Western, health sciences students also work with business, law, geography and other faculties interested in health. "How does geography fit in? Urban planning and how spaces are organized is very important in health," says Kevin Wamsley, associate dean of undergraduate health sciences.

**3** **Global experiences**  
Many health sciences students at Western graduate with an international exchange or clinical placement under their belts. "We're graduating more global citizens who are more culturally sensitive and more culturally aware," Wamsley says.

**4** **Niche programs**  
The University of Windsor launched a new master's diploma in oncology and palliative nursing — the first of its kind in Ontario. It's but one example of specialized programs. George Brown's behavioural science technology grads are finding work as technicians, therapists and consultants.

Humber College's developmental services worker diploma teaches students the skills to effectively promote the physical, mental and emotional health of individuals with intellectual disabilities, autism, physical challenges or other special needs.

In addition to learning about the range of community support services available, students learn intervention techniques, basic pharmacology, augmentative forms of communication and more. Through work placements, they also develop skills in building interpersonal relationships and counselling.

**5** **Research**  
New information is quickly making its way into the classroom and students are playing active roles in research and clinical trials.



## 6 Innovative partnerships

Health-care systems have been undergoing profound change over the past decade thanks to funding constraints, changing demographics, and new and emerging technologies. That reality has led many schools to innovative collaborations with representatives from hospitals, health-care centres and other post-secondary institutions.

## 7 Specialized care

Aging baby boomers are creating a boom in specialized

### Trends in health sciences programs

care. One of the ways Humber College is meeting those needs is through its gerontology graduate certificate. "The population of persons 65 years of age and older is increasing at a significant rate," says program co-ordinator Mary-Beth Ellerker. "There is a growing demand for highly trained staff that possesses a holistic understanding of the aging process and the diversity in care needs and expectations."

The program is offered on a part-time basis through the school of social and community services. Its multidisciplinary approach focuses on the biological, psychological, sociological and spiritual changes that accompany aging.

"Such collaboration is reflective of the current health-care system in which the health-care team now goes beyond the medical professions and includes professionals from social, community, recreation, spiritual and health care fields," Ellerker says.