



THE TOP CHEF DYSPHAGIA CHALLENGE

AN INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION (IPE) COLLABORATION BETWEEN BAYCREST HEALTH SCIENCES AND GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE LETS INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAMS DEVELOP RECIPES FOR PATIENTS WHO HAVE DIFFICULTY SWALLOWING.

RECIPE DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT ESSENTIALS

Principal Investigator:
Deborah Bonfield
Years Active: 2013-2016
Campus: St. James

Support from:
Seed Funding

Industry Partners:
Baycrest Health Sciences



Today's consumers are smart, and now it's widely accepted that the food we eat directly helps (or hurts) our health. But what happens when this crucial piece of everyday life—mealttime— becomes incredibly difficult?

Dysphagia is the medical term for when someone has trouble swallowing, usually because of a problem with the mouth, throat or esophagus (the muscular tube that moves what you swallow safely into your stomach). It can have many causes, including multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease, stroke or brain injury, but the result is almost universal: eating becomes a painful, difficult chore.

Those who suffer from dysphagia are often put on special diets, with easy to swallow foods like puréed or minced dishes. While this is wonderful for ensuring patients safely get the nutrition they need, it can be underwhelming for the patient's palate and most importantly, their dignity.

This was the inspiration for a non-traditional field education placement between George Brown College and Baycrest Health Sciences.

"[It's about] knowing how to prepare and present minced and pureed food in a more appealing way," says Lisa Sokoloff, the Manager of Training and Simulation and a Speech-Language Pathologist at Baycrest. "It's [an important skill] for future chefs and food service professionals as well as primary caregivers."

With that credo in mind—that ALL patients deserve delicious food that looks as good as it tastes—since 2013, once a year students from George Brown College are invited to collaborate with Baycrest clinicians in a 7-week collaborative learning opportunity.

Baycrest is a global leader in geriatric research and education with a special focus on aging and brain health. Every year, Baycrest provides the opportunity for the student teams to tour their facilities and mass production kitchen, in the process learning about physiological and nutrition issues with respect to clients with dysphagia.

The real work begins with a Case Study: each team is assigned a client diagnosed with dysphagia, as well as other complex health concerns such as diabetes, hypertension, Parkinson's disease or stroke. The case study includes insight into the client's lifestyle and interests.

From there, the students work on developing recipes that are nutritious, delicious and visually appealing, putting particular emphasis on brain-healthy food selection. Baycrest's Speech-Language Pathologists and Registered Dietitians are part of the team and offer guidance on modifying the textures and consistency of their recipes.

More importantly, the students all come from different educational backgrounds: every year, the mix of Food Nutrition Management, Personal Support Worker and

Culinary Management Nutrition students leads to an interesting whole-picture lesson on their roles in the healthcare system.

"[The students] discovered that they each had an important role to play in improving the health and well-being of the clients with dysphagia," says Deb Bonfield, Project Coordinator, George Brown College. "They had fun learning together."

All this work culminates in what the organizers have playfully named the "Top Chef" Dysphagia Cooking Competition, held every year for the past four years on the George Brown College campus. Each team presents a beverage, main dish, side dish and dessert to a panel of judges—plated beautifully of course.

In just four years, the program has been incredibly successful, ballooning from only 9 participating students in 2013 to 30 students in 2016. The project has even influenced GBC curriculum. "Personal Support Worker graduates now have a nutrition course offered for a full semester which includes both theory and in class lab sessions," says Deb.

Future plans are all about expansion: recipe testing and scale up for mass production with George Brown's Food Innovation & Research Studio, a website of resources for patients with dysphagia and their caregivers and of course, next year's Top Chef Dysphagia Competition in March 2017.