

BACKGROUND

Given the close working relationship between Physician Assistants (PA) and Physical Therapists (PT) in the healthcare field, there is a need to identify how educational programming can best promote interprofessional practice that maximizes patient outcomes. Knowledge of each profession's respective roles and scope of practice is essential to sharing common goals and working as a cohesive team.¹⁻³ Yet, currently, limited evidence exists to identify best practices in healthcare education between PT and PA students. Further, it is unknown what content/structure would best achieve the goal of teaching this knowledge.

PURPOSE

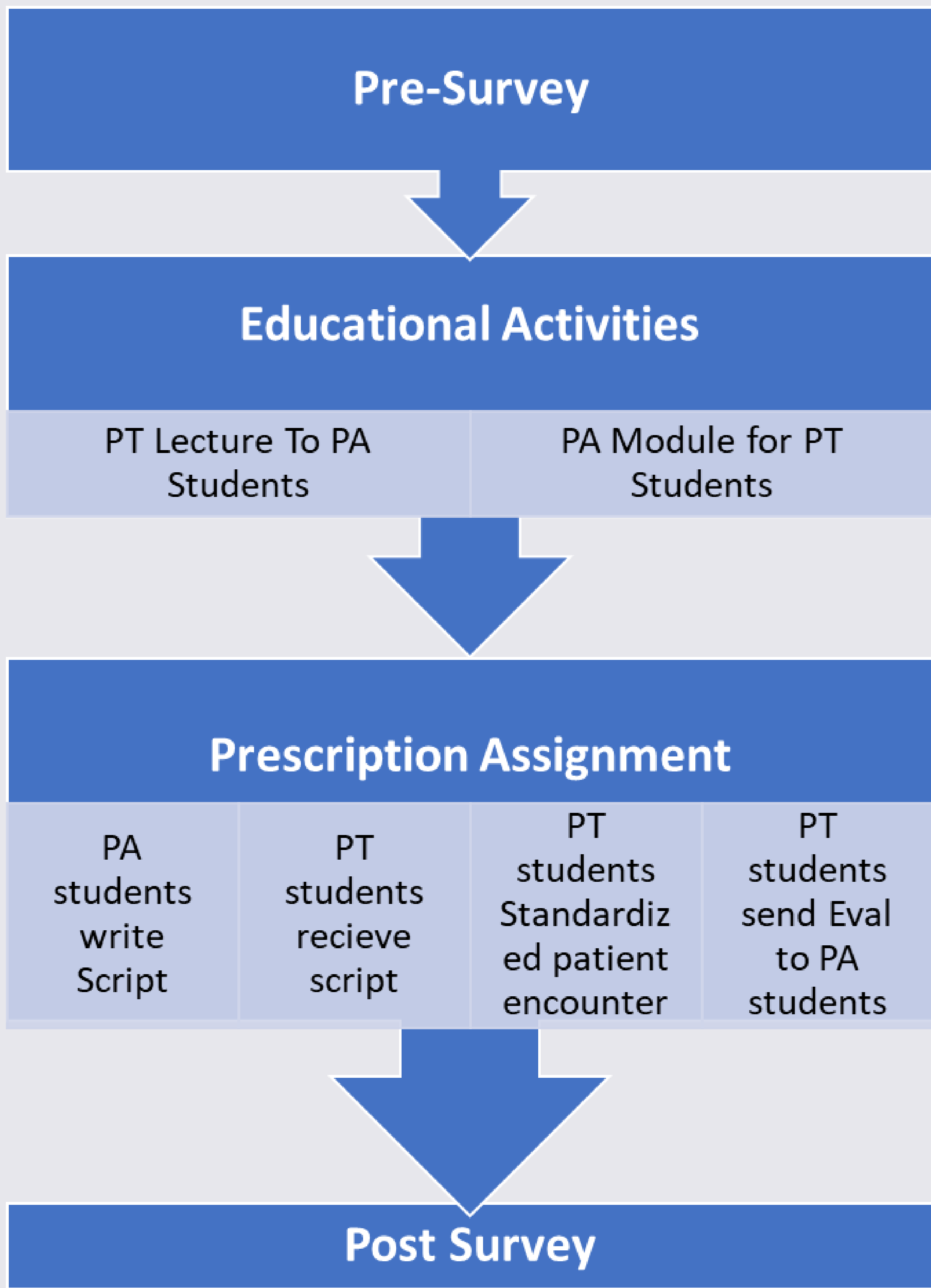
This study was designed to determine the impact of an interprofessional education (IPE) program on student understanding of roles of each profession in patient care.

- Advance student collaboration
- Increase knowledge of the scope of practice
- Improve patient care and outcomes

Real-time experiential-based learning was designed around typical clinical interactions and timeframes consistent with the professions. The timeline outlines the points of contact.

METHODS

Students enrolled in the PT and PA programs at Creighton University Phoenix participated in a multiple-segment IPE event structured around a typical referral practice pattern during the Fall of 2024 (n = 81). An 18-point pre-post survey was used to determine the impact of the programming on student knowledge of the scope of practice of the opposing professional and the perceived impact of educational activities on this knowledge.



RESULTS

Paired t-testing for knowledge of scope of practice.

- Large gap in student knowledge, with baseline student mean scores 11.3, a 61% average.
- Significant improvement in student knowledge was noted with the IPE program (p<.001).

After the even, students identified their average perception of the effectiveness of educational sessions and collaborative practice assignments as 75/100 and 73/100, respectively (n=28).

	Pre	Post	Post %
PT	10.92	14.42	80
PA	11.64	12.62	70

DISCUSSION

IPE programming resulted in a positive impact on students' learning and understanding of their peers' roles within the healthcare system. This knowledge directly impacted students' understanding of the practice of referral patterns and communication within the healthcare team. While the sample response size was small in 2024, diminishing the power of this study, the positive impact on student learning is sufficient evidence to continue to support programming. Further, this information has informed future iterations of this programming to allow for improved direct contact communication and debriefing in addition to the more traditional email/phone discussions amongst clinicians when discussing collaborative care.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Given the positive impact (both qualitative and quantitative) of the associated experiential learning project, advancement of the project will occur in the fall of 2025 with additional interactions between students facilitating increased collaboration and communication amongst peers. It is expected that this reflective time will improve the depth of understanding and promote future relationships that will allow for improved patient outcomes and holistic care. Expanding the collaboration to include additional professions may further enhance the experience by simulating a truly interdisciplinary clinical environment.

REFERENCES