

Inching Away From the Barbarians

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Sociologist Talcott Parsons used the phrase “barbarian invasion” when he spoke of the birth of new generations of children [1]. I find a grain of truth in the phrase when I think of socializing new generations of healthcare students into their chosen professions. Acquiring the knowledge, attitudes, and values that would enable them to become functional members of their specific professional orders is a long, arduous, but necessary process—all the harder and all the more necessary when we try to socialize them into working with other professionals from different orders.

And doing so is unquestionable. For between the patient and the effective act of caring there has always been, and there will always be, a socialized group of assorted professionals—accepted and accepting members of society who fulfill the needed functions and roles of the group in solving the problems and riddles of illness.

I can see in the articles of this new issue of *JRIPE* a complex view of such a group and the process of enculturation that is required to develop it. Time is not the only requirement. Layered upon time are other ingredients like favourable attitudes toward interprofessional education [2], interprofessional support for patient safety [3], accepting others on one’s own turf [4], understanding shared decision-making [5], enhancing students’ formulation of multidisciplinary roles [6], involving patients in health professional education [7], improving buy-in and sustainability of integrated models of care [8], and developing strategies for assessing collaborative competencies [9].

None of these ingredients are context-independent—to say nothing of their being assembled here for the purpose of this editorial. Another set of accepted articles might have garnered a different set of ingredients. So no one-size-fits-all solution will ever be in view. Complex problems require multiple platforms from which to handle them. Enculturation of successive generations of students and professionals into interprofessional working will have to continue, inching forward, with a rigorous scientific enterprise to light the way. That is the price to pay for a situated, contextualized, and responsible participation in healthcare. And we would be all the wiser to expect more new questions than answers from any research worth its salt.

References

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