Foreword

The combined impact of e-learning and interprofessional learning is transforming professional education in health and social care. Such, however, is the pace of change that teachers’ understanding all too easily lags behind. Some may be familiar with e-learning, others with interprofessional learning; few with both. This book comes to their rescue, written with authority and conviction by contributors from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom at the cutting edge of innovation in interprofessional e-learning.

Expectations of interprofessional learning are multiplying as it becomes more widespread and more responsive to the political agenda (WHO, 2010), stretching teachers to the limits of their ability as they explore uncharted territory, encounter unfamiliar student groups, reconfigure curricula and introduce new approaches to teaching and learning. More must be done to support them.

Generating state-of-the-art learning materials is one way, but how are production costs to be met, when educational resources are being cut in country after country recovering from economic recession? Enter e-learning: its materials are being manufactured expeditiously and economically, accessing and optimising the best available teaching expertise. Reusable, transferable, flexible and adaptable, they respond to the many and varied learning needs of students in professional and interprofessional groups in the university and the workplace.

E-learning, like interprofessional learning, knows no boundaries. It challenges teachers and students to go the second mile, urged on by the acumen, imagination, ingenuity and intellectual energy of its exponents. Resist the temptation to set premature limits, but resist too the temptation to see e-learning as the answer to every ill besetting professional and interprofessional education. It is no panacea. It is still being developed, refined and tested. It has yet to demonstrate its full potential. It may best be ‘blended’ with face-to-face learning. Well planned and delivered e-learning neither threatens nor usurps. Rather it introduces new insights, new perspectives and new approaches to enrich interprofessional learning as the successive chapters of this book testify.

In reflective mood at the end of an absorbing read, I recalled how my schoolteacher in a current affairs talk circa 1950 foreshadowed the advent of television in the classroom which, he opined, would reduce his profession to knob twiddling. How I long to reassure him.

Hugh Barr
President, the UK Centre for the Advancement of Interprofessional Education
Emeritus Professor of Interprofessional Education, University of Westminster, UK
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