Speaker 1: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Nicki Donnelson: Unless you have a medical background, you likely feel slightly uneasy and confused when you, or a loved one, are in the hospital or are facing a new diagnosis. As doctors, and others on the care team, spout off procedures, you may catch only a portion. I'm Nicki Donnelson. Today, on the Missouri State Journal, I have two faculty from the McQueary College of Health and Human Services at Missouri State University, Tara Stulce and Jeanie Skibiski. They are part of an interdisciplinary committee within the college that focuses on healthcare teams and creating better overall cooperation and communication among team members.

Tara Stulce: We all come to the table to really promote teamwork, collaboration. We follow a larger group that's called, IPEC, Interprofessional Education Collaborative. So that is a large body that really promotes collaborative teamwork within healthcare professionals in the academic setting. We really follow their mission, their vision, their core competencies, and try to find ways to educate our students in all of the different healthcare disciplines on how they can come together as a team and work together to promote the best care for the patient.

Jeanie Skibiski: Yeah, developing those core competencies is something that's done commonly in schools of medicine, so that they can learn to work with multiple professionals, and that's where we're going with this to encourage the abilities and sharing across the professions here.

Nicki Donnelson: While patient safety is always a priority for healthcare providers, Skibiski notes that, in 2001, there was a publication that brought this issue to the forefront. Now, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement sponsors patient safety awareness week. This year, it will be observed March 8th through 14th.

Jeanie Skibiski: Well, patient safety awareness week is actually a national phenomena, where it's designed for all the health professions. We should be aware of patient safety every day, but it also helps highlight things, programs, education, things to be done. It's the second week of March. What we're going to do is take some of Tara's students, they're undergraduates, and my graduate students are going to do some simulations of actual patient safety events, mishaps. You can learn a lot from simulation, just like the aviation industry has learned a lot from what goes wrong, studying what goes wrong. So we're going to reenact some things that are going to go wrong. Tara's students are going to observe that to watch to see if they can, number one, pick up the error, and what common human factors are at play whenever an error is made.

Jeanie Skibiski: Typically, it's in things like not utilizing things like checklists, communication failures, those various human things can cause a major problem.

Nicki Donnelson: Skibiski and Stulce are consistently impressing upon their students the importance of the healthcare team. But they say you are a part of it too. As the patient, or family member, you play an important role in recovery, even if you feel like a nag, or feel that you are slowing down the appointment, ask your questions and get informed.

Tara Stulce: In my classes, we talk a lot about how we are all a member of the team, so that includes all of the different professional disciplines But that also includes the patient, as a member of the team, and that includes the family members, as a member of the team. And so, we talk a lot about just being aware, maybe, even just having a family member present with you, when you visit your provider, so they can pick up on other things, hear other things that your provider said that, maybe, you didn't hear, and ask a lot of questions. That it's perfectly okay to ask questions to your providers.

Jeanie Skibiski: That's common in a lot of health awareness, health safety awareness, things are ask three questions of your provider whenever you make a visit. Because the term, or the issue, is health literacy. A lot of people don't understand the lingo and the jargon that health providers use. What does that mean? I don't know what the doctor just told me. It sounded really good, but I didn't understand a word of it. So those kind of things are critical for any family member, especially, if we're considering elderly or somebody with communication issues, making sure that they fully understand those instructions, or what to expect from a procedure, and those types of things.

Nicki Donnelson: To learn more about patient safety awareness week, or other initiatives of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, visit ihi.org/engage/initiatives. That was Jeanie Skibiski and Tara Stulce. I'm Nicki Donnelson for the Missouri State Journal.

Speaker 1: For more information, contact the office of university communications at (417) 836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.