SE-34 INNOVATIONS AND INCLUSION IN PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE EDUCATION

INTER-PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE EDUCATION IN METROPOLITAN ABORIGINAL AND Torres Strait ISLANDER PRE-SCHOOLS: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION

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Introduction: Access to culturally responsive occupational therapy services for children and families from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds is limited. In recent years, a health organisation has been running inter-professional practice education placements for occupational therapy and speech pathology students in partnership with metropolitan Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschools. Providing practice education experiences for students in these pre-school contexts may be one way to enhance availability of culturally responsive services while also developing students’ skills, knowledge and confidence.

Objectives: To evaluate the impact of this placement experience on students’ knowledge and application of culturally responsive practices.

Method: In 2015-2016, an action research project was conducted. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with students, clinical educators, pre-school educators, and parents/caregivers. Surveys examining student perceived skills, knowledge and practice application were also collected from students pre- and post-placement. Following each action research cycle, emerging findings were used to inform changes to the placement model in the next cycle.

Results: Findings will include key themes from interviews with stakeholders, and pre- and post-placement measures of change in student perceived knowledge and application of culturally responsive practices. Preliminary results suggest that this placement has positive outcomes for student health professionals.

Conclusion: This placement model positively impacts student practices at least in the short term. Further research is needed to understand the longer term impact. The model may be applicable to other practice settings and with other people for whom access to culturally responsive services is challenging.

THE IMPACT OF UNDERGRADUATE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS’ INTERPERSONAL SKILLS ON THEIR FIELDWORK EDUCATION PERFORMANCE: A PILOT INVESTIGATION

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Introduction: Interpersonal skills such as active listening, verbal communication, and body language are essential competencies for occupation therapists. Occupational therapy students are expected to demonstrate these competencies when completing fieldwork placements.

Objective: To investigate if interpersonal skills are predictive of occupational therapy students’ fieldwork performance.

Method: A cross-sectional study was conducted involving third and fourth year occupational therapy undergraduate students (n = 70). Students’ interpersonal skills were measured using the Listening Styles Profile (LSP-R), the Active-Empathic Listening Scale (AELS), and the Interpersonal Communication Competence Scale (ICCS). Students’ midway and final fieldwork placement performance was measured using the SPEF-R. The relationships between students’ interpersonal skills and their fieldwork performance were examined using univariate and multivariate regressions.

Results: Students’ higher ICCS interaction management subscale scores were predictive of better self-management skills at midway through fieldwork placements (β = 1.93, SE = 0.76). Higher ICCS interaction management subscale scores were predictive of better professional behaviours (β = 1.28, SE = 0.64) and better service evaluation skills (β = 2.84, SE = 0.95) at the final SPEF-R completion. Higher ICCS empathy subscale scores predicted lower documentation SPEF-R scores at halfway (β = 0.81, SE = 0.38), while higher ICCS supportiveness subscale scores predicted lower halfway service provision SPEF-R scores (β = 2.84, SE = 1.77). Subscale scores of LSP-R and AELS were not found predictive of SPEF-R scores.

Conclusion: This preliminary evidence indicates that occupational therapy students’ interpersonal skills can predict some key SPEF-R competencies. These interpersonal skills should be incorporated into the curriculum of academic education programs to better prepare students embarking on fieldwork placements.