The Human Library and the Development of Cultural Sensitivity in Student Occupational Therapists

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June 2021

Introduction

- Living in a culturally diverse world, it is essential to embed cultural diversity education into healthcare professional training to reduce healthcare disparity (Occupational Therapy Council of Australia, 2018; World Health Organization, 2020).
- Monash University has adopted the Human Library (HL) as a teaching activity aiming at enhancing occupational therapy students’ cultural competencies for more than three years.
- HL is similar to a standard library except that the books are people with a story to tell and the reading is a conversation (Russell & Linsley, 2011).
- The HL aims to reduce prejudice and stereotyping through storytelling to improve social understanding and cultural awareness (Human Library Organization, 2019a, 2019b).
- In 2021, 98 occupational therapy students enrolled in a undergraduate 2nd year unit completed an online module introducing cultural concepts, and engaged in self-reflection on their own culture and competency prior to participating in a HL.
- This study aims to investigate the effects of HL on cultural competence (CC).

Objectives

- To evaluate the changes in students’ cultural awareness and sensitivity after attending the HL.
- To understand the perspective of student OTs participating in the HL to provide a deeper understanding of CCA results.

Methods

- Mixed methods explanatory sequential design used.
- All students eligible to attend the HL are invited to participate in the study
- Outcome measure: Cultural Competence Assessment (CCA) is used to measure students cultural competencies pre and post HL. It uses 7-point Likert self-report scale measuring CC across two factors: Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity, (CAS) and Culturally Competent Behaviors (CCB).
- CCA was administered in the week prior to the HL and again within one week after students attended the HL. Paired t-test used to measure changes of CCA scores.
- Qualitative data will be collected using a focus group approximately 4 weeks following the HL.

Results

- 45 subjects completed the pre-HL CCA, and 28 subjects completed CCA both pre and post-HL.
- 71.7% with previous cultural learning experience
- 31.3% with health, aged care or disability work experience
- 96.6% interested in learning about different cultural and building cross-cultural skills
- 81.9% with less than weekly social cultural interactions
- 40% with weekly or less than weekly cultural interactions at work or university

CCA Scores

- CAS score increased from 63.89 (SD 7.86), to 65.64 (SD 6.59). CCB increased from 93.3 (SD 2.2), to 94.3 (SD 2.12). (p=0.016).
- Both CCB (p=0.039) and Total CCA (p=0.018) showed significant change from pre to post HL.
- One item (Individual people may identify with more than one cultural group) was statistically significant (p=0.016).

Focus groups will be conducted (results not included in this poster)

- 73.4% of participants are from countries other than Australia
- Majority of the participants have less than weekly social cultural interactions
- 40% of participants with weekly or less than weekly cultural interactions at work or university

This 2020 cohort of students have had a unique experience of beginning their university studies during the global COVID-19 pandemic. This has impacted their encounters with people from different cultures and may help to explain the wide range of responses in the CCA.

Despite small sample size (N=28), results suggest significant differences in pre-post CCB (p=0.039) and Total CCA (p=0.018) results.

The Human Books in the 2021 Human Library at Monash University:

- An Australian Soldier in War and Peace
- Caring for a brother with complex physical and mental health issues
- Scotland to Australia
- The perspective of an OT/Saudi/Muslim/Woman! Working with refugees?
- Getting to know you
- Long distance grandparenting in the COVID-19 era
- Prognosis poor but not dead yet
- Growing up with a mental illness in Melbourne
- Sri Lanka, military and marine
- Immigrant experiences of nursing in Australia
- What I learned growing up far from my parents? (in Bangladesh)
- Strategies for Safety in the Community for people on the Autism Spectrum — A Mother’s Journey

As an American: Ten things I was not expecting about living in Australia

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Full paper expected mid 2022

Discussion

- Preliminary quantitative results are encouraging for using the HL as a method for teaching cultural competence in student healthcare professionals.
- CCA results will be explored further by focus group in order to understand the perspective of student OTs and the Human Library experience.
- Limitations – only 28 pairs of students, small sample size

Table 1. Participant Demographics (N = 45)

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References


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