

COVID-19 Pandemic's Impact on MSOT/OTA Learning and Communication

Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic caused occupational therapy programs in New York to shift to online learning for the duration of 2020. The aim of this study was to determine how this change has affected New York MSOT students' feelings of preparedness toward their future careers, attitudes towards this modern style of learning, and their physical and mental health as a result of the shift to online learning. Participants were students who were enrolled in the MSOT program at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University during the year 2020. A virtual survey consisting of nominal and ordinal response values was administered to all 74 subjects. Most students felt concerned about their preparedness for future clinical work due to the shift to virtual fieldwork, in addition to feeling less competent in passing the NBCOT examination at the end of their MSOT program at SUNY Downstate. This supports the idea that in-person clinical experiences in addition to in-person lab sessions for MSOT students are both important to a students' overall competency and preparedness. Based on the survey results, the concerns shown by students' are vital to understanding how virtual learning and clinical experiences may hinder a students' ability to feel confident in their professional capabilities. Further research should be conducted to determine how widespread these perceptions are, or if they only applied to SUNY Downstate students.