



Abstract

This research study was aimed at exploring the curriculum of occupational therapy (OT) programs nationwide to obtain information about how culture related concepts are being integrated currently. Information gathered will help to contribute to the overall objective of incorporating cultural humility into the OT academic curriculum at SUNY Downstate to ensure that students become aware of the importance of integrating cultural humility into their clinical practice. The curriculum of 136 OT programs was investigated using program websites, social media pages and OT blogs to determine how cultural constructs are being integrated. Results showed that out of 136 OT program curriculums; 47 incorporates culture related concepts (cultural competency, cultural humility, cultural diversity e.t.c) in their curriculum as indicated on their program website, 41 had their curriculum available without a course description on the program website while 48 programs did not have their curriculum indicated on the website.

Objectives

This research study was aimed at exploring the curriculum of occupational therapy (OT) programs nationwide to obtain information about how culture related concepts are being integrated currently. Results are intended to help ensure that students engage in culturally sensitive practice as future practitioners.

Materials

Includes multiple search engines such as ask.com, bing.com, google.com, google custom search and yahoo.com. Social media pages; Facebook, twitter and Instagram were explored. Blogs like CommunOT, COTAD, AOTA blog and the Occupational Therapy Hub blog were also used to gather relevant curriculum information.

Methods

This research involved fact finding through the utilization of occupational therapy program websites, social media pages and OT blogs to explore the curriculum of OT programs nationwide. Focus was on 163 occupational therapy programs available within the United States. 27 out of the 163 programs were excluded from this research study; 2 because there was no website link to the OT program of the school and 25 because the OT department did not have a Masters program (MOT, MA, MS or MSOT). Since the focus of the overall objective of this research is to incorporate cultural humility into the Master of Science Occupational Therapy academic curriculum at SUNY Downstate, using Masters program as an inclusion criteria was necessary to exclude any other entry level OT programs (OTA, OTD, Pre-OT). Therefore, only the curriculum of 136 OT programs across the United States was investigated to determine how cultural constructs are being integrated.

Results

Results showed that out of the 136 occupational therapy school curriculums that were investigated, 47 OT programs had culture related constructs in their curriculum as indicated on their program website. These constructs included culturally responsive care, cultural competency, cultural humility, cultural diversity, cultural aspects of OT service delivery, cultural analysis, cultural critique, cross-cultural learning for OT, cultural sensitivity, study of cultural differences, cultural influence on OT practice, cultural intricacies of health care, cultural dynamics and cultural factors relating to competence development. 41 occupational therapy programs had their curriculum available without a course description on the program website while 48 programs did not have their curriculum indicated on the website.

Discussion

The lack of curriculum link or course description on the website of the 89 OT programs posed an obstacle. This made it more challenging to obtain the necessary curriculum information hence, there was a need to search other avenues to gather information about each program's academics. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram of these 89 schools were explored and findings showed that focus was more on social events that were being hosted as opposed to indicating curriculum information. In addition, from the list of the 6 guiding questions, question 5 "What approaches have been taken to instill cultural humility/cultural competency into the student body?" provided relevant information on how Cultural humility and cultural competency were instilled into the student body through different means like COTAD (Coalition for Occupational Therapy Advocates for Diversity) which enables some OT schools hold events that are centered around bringing awareness to diversify and instill cultural constructs into OT education. After exploring the above avenues, there was still no indication of curriculum information that could have shown if the 89 OT programs currently incorporate any culture related concepts. Instead, there was more information about extra-curricular activities in the likes of the COTAD events that centered around fostering cultural constructs.

Conclusions

Future research should explore other avenues like contacting each OT programs chair, faculty members or alumni via email, phone or online surveys in order to obtain curriculum information so as to enhance the process of gathering substantial information about the incorporation of culture related constructs in each OT program. The findings of this research demonstrated the need for more cultural constructs to be implemented into occupational therapy educational systems nationwide.

References

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