

Evaluating the Efficacy of Occupational Therapy Curriculum through Student Self-Perceived Preparedness in Level II Fieldwork



Valerie Batcher, JoAnn Beyan, Mihyun Jo, and Anna Popova
Dr. Jasmin Thomas, OTD, OTR/L, Dr. Allen Lewis, PhD, CRC
SUNY Downstate School of Health Sciences Occupational Therapy Program

Abstract

- Level II Fieldwork (FW II) is an opportunity for students to display their clinical knowledge and foundational skills acquired through their academic coursework. The experience allows students to learn about the demands and expectations in current clinical settings in order to become competent clinicians.
- It is fundamental that school curriculums are responsive to the current demands of Occupational Therapy (OT) practice.
- The purpose of this quality assurance study was to evaluate how SUNY Downstate OT Program prepares students to perform at FW II affiliations. Data collected via New Innovations (NI) database were reviewed.
- NI database provides information regarding diagnosis, treatment and assessments. A student survey obtained information on the student experience of self-reported level of preparedness at FW II affiliations in diagnoses, assessments and treatments.
- The survey was analyzed, and cross referenced with topics within the current curriculum. The intention was to determine whether the occupational therapy curriculum at SUNY Downstate adequately prepares students for FW II.

The overall results of this study found that SUNY Downstate OT Program adequately prepares students for FW II affiliations. Qualitative data conclusions have provided suggestions to modify and improve the SUNY Downstate OT program. These suggestions aim to better reflect the present demands in OT practice and will benefit future students by preparing them for current FW II.

Objectives

- Understand the importance of curriculum design
- Evaluate the adequacy of the SUNY Downstate OT Program Curriculum in preparing students for FW II
- Assess whether curriculum reflects current demands in the field of OT

Methods

Participants

- 34 third year students in the OT Program at SUNY Downstate
- FW II students finished all of the required courses and two FW II affiliations
- Completion of the survey was required upon finishing FW II

Procedure

Surveys were distributed electronically to SUNY Downstate OT students

- Two rounds of surveys:
 - Rd 1: at the end of the summer FW II
 - Rd 2: at the end of the fall FW II

Materials

- Student Survey
- Respondent participation
- New Innovations Database

Results

- Generally, students felt adequately prepared in assessment, treatment and diagnosis represented in Figure 1.
- Figure 2 represents areas where students indicated indifference choosing Neither Agree nor Disagree (3).
- The 2nd Round of surveys found that the overall responses ranged from Somewhat Agree (4) to Strongly Agree (5) in all areas.

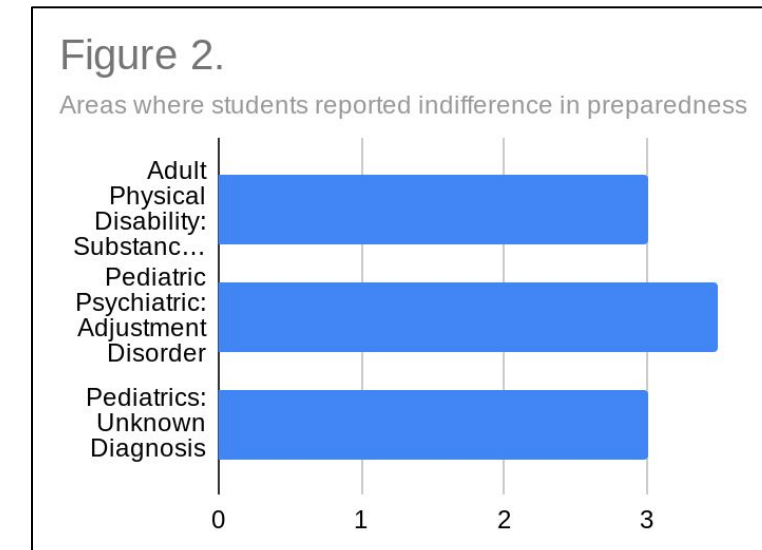
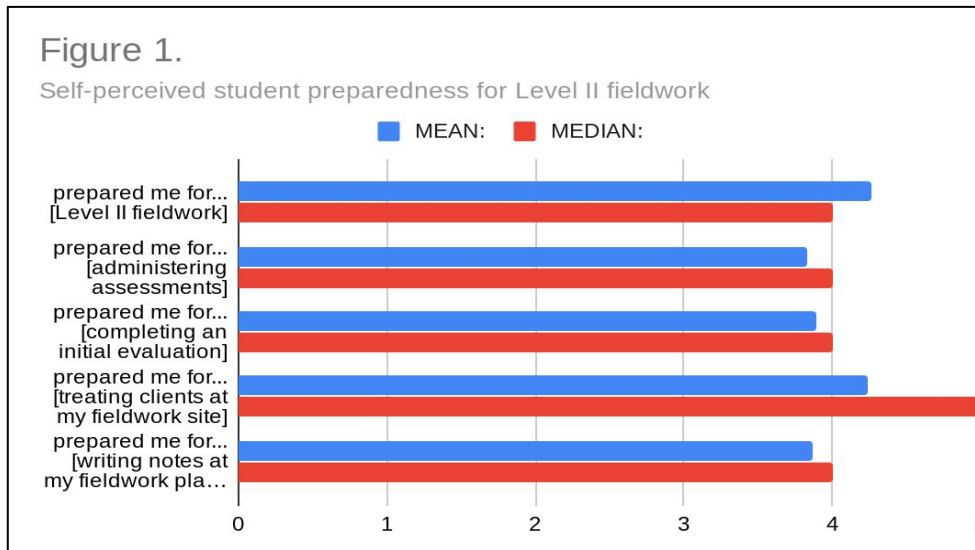
Qualitative Data:

Q. 1: "Did you use assessments at your FW II that you did not have exposure to during the OT Program?" The answers include: Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA), the Box and Blocks Test, Action Research Arm Test (ARAT), ADM Placemat assessment, AMPAC, Barthel Index, Bivaba, BRIEF-2, CAM, Care tool, FIM, Functional Upper Extremity Levels (FUEL), Letter Cancellation Test, Quick DASH, Word Copying Test.

Q. 2: "... are there any specific topics you feel needed to be addressed more during... the OT Program?" Answers: interventions (11 participants), note writing (10 participants), pediatrics (8 participants), assessments (7 participants), acute care (6 participants), manual therapy (6 participants), sensory integration (4 participants), transfers (3 participants).

Q. 3: "Are there any specific topics you feel needed to be addressed less?" Answers: lengthy assessments (3 participants).

Q. 4: "Is there anything notable to improve the OT Program?" Answers: interventions (7 participants), assessments (4 participants), note writing (4 participants), transfers (4 participants), pediatrics (2 participants).



Limitations

- The survey length and format might have been tiresome for participants, which may have affected the results.
- This study is limited to one year of students. A larger sample of students would make conclusions drawn more statistically significant.
- As this survey was self-perceived, actual performance and confidence of students cannot be attained

Discussion

Consensus among respondents shows that topics related to specific interventions, assessments, note writing, transfers, and pediatrics warrant greater attention within the academic curriculum. It is highly suggested that accessible supplemental resources are available to students when time constraints prevent attention to topics within the curriculum. As programs have limited time to address topics, providing supplemental materials may help support students and improve preparedness.

The survey was distributed to the students twice to accommodate two segments of FW II placements. Both results were combined in the data analysis. This may reveal discrepancies between the responses. The second response could be influenced by acquired learning and confidence from the first FW II affiliation. While this is anticipated, it will affect the current conclusions drawn. For future research, analyzing the data separately would be more informative regarding FW II preparedness. It would be beneficial to study how the perceived confidence by students has changed through their level of experience, or whether they do not have the foundational knowledge from a flawed curriculum to be effective in their affiliations.

Curriculums are limited in their ability to thoroughly demonstrate implementation of assessments, treatments and diagnoses due to time restrictions. FW II, though encompassing more responsibility and hands on experience as opposed to previous coursework, is an extension of the educational experience. This must be understood by supervisors when they assume the supervisory roles. The question remains as to whether FW II supervisors are providing students the appropriate time to acclimate & observe. Some diagnoses, assessments and treatments are seen more frequently in the occupational therapy profession, therefore require more attention within the curriculum.

Conclusions

Upon completion of the first round, the data revealed that the SUNY Downstate Occupational Therapy Curriculum has adequately prepared students for FW II in the areas of diagnosis, treatment and assessment. Low median values represented in the resulting data appeared in Adult Physical Disability: Substance Related Disorder, Pediatric Psychiatric: Adjustment Disorder, and Pediatrics: Unknown Diagnosis. Values improved in the second round of quantitative data analyzed. Qualitative data revealed themes that students felt were under-represented in the curriculum, and required more avid attention to improve the preparedness for FW II affiliation.

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