

Characteristics, Practices and Beliefs of Occupational Therapists who are Fieldwork Educators in Arizona

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INTRODUCTION

- Fieldwork is a critical component of OT education. With greater demand for fieldwork sites, academic fieldwork coordinators are often faced with the challenge of finding enough opportunities for students. This increased need has required alternative sites and strategies to fill the demand.³
- Currently, no research exists on the thoughts and actions of fieldwork educators in Arizona.
- This study examined the characteristics, practices and beliefs of occupational therapists in Arizona who accept fieldwork students.
- The results of this study will allow academic fieldwork coordinators to strengthen a program's ability to meet fieldwork educators' and occupational therapy students' needs for fieldwork.

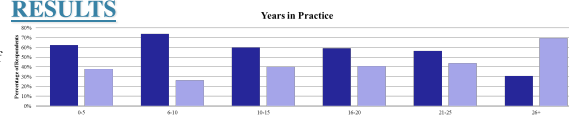
LITERATURE REVIEW

- Reasons that fieldwork educators accept students include contributing to the profession, increasing positive energy and potential employees, and expanding motivation to improve supervision, clinical reasoning and time management skills.^{1,4,5}
- Various models of fieldwork supervision have been proposed to facilitate the supervision process.³

METHODS

- This study is the second part of a descriptive, exploratory study conducted in 2014. Data was gathered via an original survey developed from the literature review.²
- A convenience sample was used of occupational therapists in Arizona who are members of the American Occupational Therapy Association.²
- The survey was sent to 410 therapists; 172 responded for a response rate of 42%.
- Data from 158 respondents was analyzed to determine characteristics of fieldwork educators versus non-fieldwork educators. Practices and beliefs were examined for the subset of fieldwork educators only (n=89; 53%).

RESULTS



- Cross tabulation analyses were significant for years in practice (with those therapists practicing from six to ten years most likely to accept students, $\chi^2 < 0.01$) and practice setting (with those therapists who work in schools ($p = 0.05$) and hospitals ($p = 0.03$) more likely to accept students).
- A stepwise regression showed that decreased workload for the fieldwork educator was the single variable that predicted a fieldwork educator would accept a student ($p < 0.001$).
- The top supervision model used by fieldwork educators was the 1:1 model (69%). Fieldwork educators would consider using the 1:1 (38%), multiple mentor (26%) and aggregate models (21%) in the future. Therapists believed the advantages of these supervision models were the learning opportunities for students and efficiency.
- When fieldwork educators were asked about the strategies they use to demonstrate complex thinking to a student, narrating the thought process to students about intervention was the majority response (54%).
- Fieldwork educators believed that students struggle with the application of knowledge (41%) and transitioning from the academic setting to the clinical setting (26%).

QUALITIES OF SUPERVISORS

- Good mentor/role model
- Good communication skills
- Knowledgeable

QUALITIES OF STUDENTS

- Active involvement through interaction
- Flexibility
- Openness to new learning

BENEFITS OF SUPERVISION

- Contributes to profession
- Keeps clinician's skills current

STRESSORS OF SUPERVISION

- Responsibility of supervision/teaching students
- Time commitment
- Concern for student's capability

CONCLUSION

- Fieldwork coordinators can target therapists who have been working for six to ten years, those in hospitals and schools and/or those who believe that fieldwork will decrease their workload, as they are more likely to accept students.
- Alternative models of fieldwork supervision can be promoted to encourage therapists to share responsibilities and students to learn collaboratively.
- Fieldwork coordinators can facilitate positive qualities and techniques in fieldwork educators and students to ensure a successful outcome.
- Fieldwork coordinators can share the results of this survey to various sites that are not accepting students to educate them on the potential benefits to persuade more therapists to become fieldwork educators and to improve the fieldwork experience for therapists and students.
- More fieldwork educators increase opportunity for students, improve the quality of fieldwork education, make students more competent professionals and ultimately increase patient quality of care.

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