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Service Learning for Balance and Activity Promotion in the Older Adult

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Service learning for balance and activity promotion in the older adult. Chris Childers, PT, MS, GCS, CEEAA

Introduction

The question asked, on three different occasions was: “If 2 activities that you might do to improve the balance of your elderly client”.

A phenomenological design was approved by the University of St. Augustine IRB. Participants were a convenience sample of 150 PT students in three consecutive cohorts. Students were both volunteers of the MOT and DPT program in a ratio of approximately 1:3.

Participants were a convenience sample of 195 third term students in three consecutive cohorts. Students were both volunteers of the MOT and DPT program in a ratio of approximately 1:3.

Method

Participants were a convenience sample of 150 PT students in three consecutive cohorts. Students were both volunteers of the MOT and DPT program in a ratio of approximately 1:3.

Sequence of data collection analysis

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1st survey pre class

2nd survey post class

3rd survey post service learning

Reflective paper

Analysis and results

This classical content analysis approach produces quantitative and qualitative data. Student answers were sorted into categories: basic, intermediate, advanced, vague and tests. Categorization was confirmed with local CGS clinicians.

Refections

Sequence of data collection analysis

The rest of that session he seemed more engaged and all that was required to evoke this from him was the right kind of music.

“I was able to achieve many personality traits that are naturally so difficult to ascertain in a PT environment without the benefit of observation.”

“I feel the lived experience was more impactful in the overall learning than only learning the concepts in a classroom”.

“This experience allowed me to have a complete new view on the geriatric community because it showed me that they want to move and want to be active as long as there are opportunities available to them”.

References

1. 2013 Barr and Wong challenged faculty to provide creative and innovative ways of teaching meaningful content related to the care of the older adult population. Service learning combines community service with learning objectives and reflective, metacognitive and community needs. Service learning helps students manage the complex care of the older adult stroke population and intergenerational programs benefit both generations.

2. Participation in the movement and music workshops at local assisted living and senior housing complexes.

3. Falls are a leading concern with the older adult population and students need to be trained in the complex issue of balance and activity promotion in the older adult. Movement and music workshops are designed on the principles of improving engagement through music and psychological issues through movement.

4. “The music brought energy to the patients and made them feel good about exercising.”

5. “The rest of that session he seemed more engaged and all that was required to evoke this from him was the right kind of music.”

6. “It's great to see that something as simple as music can have such a profound effect on therapy.”

7. “The music brought energy to the patients and made them feel good about exercising.”

8. “The rest of that session he seemed more engaged and all that was required to evoke this from him was the right kind of music.”

9. “It’s great to see that something as simple as music can have such a profound effect on therapy.”

10. “This experience allowed me to have a complete new view on the geriatric community because it showed me that they want to move and want to be active as long as there are opportunities available to them”.

Discussion

Student ability to apply more complex balance interventions improved after the lecture/lab by 50% and an additional 30% after the service learning. The paper category increased after the lecture/lab due to the increased opportunity to apply the concepts in clinical situations.

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Conclusion

Service learning allowed the students an opportunity to experience the older adult population participating in a planned and age-appropriate activity. It would appear from the reflective work that this allowed them to develop a much greater appreciation for the abilities and desires of the older adult to join in activities and the need to use appropriate incentives to encourage participation. It is hoped that the students will further develop and build on these concepts during their clinical internships.