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Service Learning for Balance and Activity Promotion in the Older Adult

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Introduction

Service learning combines community service with learning objective and reflection, meeting academic and community needs. Service learning helps students manage the complex care of the older adult stroke population1 and intergenerational benefits both generations. The purpose of the study was to explore and compare student ideas and thoughts regarding balance and activity promotion in the older adult both in and outside a service-learning opportunity. The results show that students believe that older adults need to be trained in the complex issues of balance and activity promotion in the older adult.2

Method

The question asked, on three different occasions was:

“Yes 2. Do you think that you might do to improve the balance of your elderly client?”

A phenomenological design was approved by the University of St. Augustine IIB. Participants were a convenience sample of 185 third-term students in three consecutive cohorts. Students were both pass/fail and letter grade. Students were asked to complete a survey and a reflective paper. All students do volunteer work as part of the class and 31% of the participants were randomly selected, lottery style, to participate in the movement and music workshops at local assisted living and senior housing complexes.

Sequence of data collection analysis

1st survey pre class
2nd survey post class
3rd survey post service learning

Reflective paper

Sequence of data collection analysis

2014 Barr and Whang challenged faculty to provide creative and innovative ways of teaching meaningful content related to the care of the older adult population.1 Service learning combines community service with learning objective and reflection, meeting academic and community needs. Service learning helps students manage the complex care of the older adult stroke population and intergenerational benefits both generations. The purpose of the study was to explore and compare student ideas and thoughts regarding balance and activity promotion in the older adult both in and outside a service-learning opportunity. The results show that students believe that older adults need to be trained in the complex issues of balance and activity promotion in the older adult.2

Movement and music workshops are designed on the principles of improving engagement through music and physiological and psychological issues through movement.3-5

Analysis and results

This classical content analysis approach produces quantitative and qualitative data.6 Student answers were sorted into categories: basic, intermediate, advanced, vague and tests. Categorization was confirmed with local CDS clinicians.

Reflections

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

“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 observe how incorporating elements that are meaningful can really motivate someone to work on exercise without even realizing it”.

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

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

“With this particular movement class, it was clear that it is more than just an exercise class, it is working with the whole person”.

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

“arHoping that the students will further develop and build on these concepts during their clinical internships.”

Discussion

Student ability to apply more complex balance interventions improved after the lecture by 35% and an additional 20% after the service learning. The major category increased after the lecture/professors due to the fresh content. The major category increased after the service-learning due to the engaging environment. Students that participated in service learning witnessed an improvement in the major category only evolved after the service learning and increased as the students further reflected on the experience. Students in the service learning reflected on older adult resilience and their experience of the activity tolerance of the older adult while rethinking the choosing weak concept of not under prescribing exercise for the older adult.7

Limitations

Limitations include only 31% of students being involved with the workshop and no third survey done of those students not in the workshop. However, all students write a reflective paper regardless of their participation.

Researcher bias is significant in qualitative work and this researcher has a strong dance background. The researcher is the only one to observe the older adult community because it showed me that they want to move and want to be active as long as there are opportunities available to them8.

Conclusion

Service learning allowed the students an opportunity to experience the older adult population participating in a themed 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 ensure participation. It is hoped that the students will further develop and build on these concepts during their clinical internships.

“arHoping that the students will further develop and build on these concepts during their clinical internships.”

References


6. 5. Centers for Disease control and prevention 2014.


