Information Literacy for Evidence-Based Practice: Creating a Self-Paced Online Course

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ABSTRACT

Distance students are often at the disadvantage of not receiving the same interactive information literacy instruction as their on-campus counterparts. The University of St. Augustine library, which supports four completely online degree programs in addition to campus-based programs, created a one credit, self-paced, online course called Information Literacy for Evidence-Based Practice (IL for EBP) for students within the distance education programs at the university, specifically the transitional Doctor of Physical Therapy (OTD) program, and the doctor of education (EdD) program. The course is also open to faculty members at the university.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Throughout the physical therapy and occupational therapy literature, studies show that practitioners are familiar with evidence-based practice (EBP), but lack the skills, time, and access to evidence to make effective use of EBP (Benjamindsson, 2013; Sales, 2009: Iles, 2006; Maher 2004). Learning these skills should begin in school. Librarians throughout higher education are using various means of teaching information literacy (IL) to students, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Some of these methods are general, and some focus on specific disciplines, such as health sciences (Durando, 2005). Some IL programs for health sciences students focus on linking the concepts of EBP with those of IL, such as the one described by Boruff and Thomas (2011), which showed the success of integrating IL in teaching physical and occupational therapy students EBP principles. At the same time, teaching IL skills in an online format has been a growing trend in the literature and in practice as an increase in online-only students and degree programs has become standard for most institutions (Kumar, 2012; Robertson, 2009; Schimming, 2008; Jacobs, 2007). The literature also reflects that stand-alone, credit-bearing IL courses are often successful, especially when they are directly linked to a specific academic discipline (Burke, 2012; Daughtrey, 2011). The IL for EBP course at the University of St. Augustine combines each of these factors (linking IL with EBP, specific to health sciences students, taught online, and taken for academic credit) with the end goal of helping students, and consequently practitioners, become more efficient with EBP.

METHODS

The IL for EBP course at the University of St. Augustine is a one credit, self-paced online course, hosted on Jenzabar’s eLearning learning management system. It is currently open to students in the distance education programs at the university, specifically the transitional doctor of physical therapy (IDPT) program, transitional doctor of occupational therapy (OTD) program, doctor of health sciences (DHSc) program, and the doctor of education (EdD) program. The course is also open to faculty members at the university.

Students within the course complete four units of content (including reading text, watching videos, and completing tutorials) at their own pace and complete a total of nine assignments – four hands-on assignments and five discussion based “bulletin board” assignments. The paced delivery of the course ensures that distance students have access to information literacy instruction in a consistent and on a familiar format.

RESULTS

Though this is an ongoing project, so far two students have successfully passed the University of St. Augustine’s Information Literacy for Evidence-Based Practice course. Two more students are currently enrolled and have completed several assignments. Student feedback has been very positive, with some constructive criticism leading to changes within the course, including clarifying instructions on the PubMed Assignment and the ProQuest IntoTrac Assignment. We will continue to evaluate student learning and the impact of this course as more students complete it.