Shared Decision-Making as Experienced by Rehabilitation Students on an International Service-Learning Trip: A Phenomenological Investigation

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SHARED DECISION-MAKING AS EXPERIENCED BY REHABILITATION STUDENTS ON AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING TRIP: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

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ABSTRACT

The value of service-learning has been well documented in medical and allied health education (Abedini, Gruppen, Kolars, & Kumagai, 2012; Ekelman, Dal Bello-Haas, Bazyk, & Bazyk, 2003; Pechak, Gonzalez, Summers, & Capshaw, 2013; Pechak & Thompson, 2009; Ryan-Krause, 2016). Several studies have been conducted looking at cultural experiences and clinical reasoning (Corbett & Fickert, 2009; Sheppard & Landry, 2015; Nouvet, Chan & Schwartz, 2016). What has not been well-examined though is the concept of shared decision-making by those engaged in service-learning. The purpose of this phenomenological investigation (i.e., study) was to identify how occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT) students defined shared decision-making in the context of an international service-learning trip to Guatemala City, Guatemala in April 2017.

STUDY AIMS

1. Unearth the inter-professional service-learning experiences of OT and PT students.
2. Define the concept of shared decision-making in the context of international service-learning in Guatemala City, Guatemala.
3. Identify and document the influence of shared decision-making on the continuity of care for clients in an underserved and impoverished community.

The researchers predicted that how students experience, define, and describe shared decision-making based on the assigned service-learning project may change day-to-day. These changes may be due in part to their daily assignments, and defined roles within those assignments or projects; in short, team dynamics may also influence the shared decision-making experience, as well.

METHODS

The methodology used in this investigation is best aligned to the work of Moustakas (Moustakas, 1994). First, a heterogenous group was identified and based upon demographics. Second, a philosophical discussion occurred among the participants and the researchers to refuse the subjective-objective perspective and therefore conclude that this type of research has both a quantitative as well as qualitative component. Third, the two onsite researchers bracketed themselves by discussing personal experiences with the phenomenon both prior to the week as well as during the week. Fourth, end-of-the-day group discussions and any individual reporting (if needed), or smaller group one-on-one debriefings, led to the data or transcribed group discussions. Fifth, data analysis followed a systematic process with member checking occurring in two-steps: between Researcher One and Two, and then between Two and Three. Finally, another checking occurred between Researcher One, Two, and Three to make-meaning and uncover the final emergent themes.

RESULTS

Several themes emerged through the multi-step methodology used to make-meaning of the service-learning experience. These themes included: resources, process, team, flexibility, implementation, and meaning-making. Students also used the following words to explain their shared decision-making experience: collaborate, piggy-back, communicate, bounce ideas off one another, bring and draw upon in past experiences, and work together.

DISCUSSION

Students who participated in this project defined shared decision-making through a collective experience. They described their processes too as collaborative and developed a strong appreciation for the benefits of working with a team. In addition, students demonstrated an understanding of how the team contributed to the outcomes of the projects as well as the continuity of care for their clients in the community.

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