Improving Occupational Therapy in Acute Rehabilitation

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DCE Site

- University of Southern California (USC) of Arcadia Hospital
- Non-profit acute hospital serving the San Gabriel Community
- Acute Rehabilitation Unit
- **Mission statement:** "Provide a unique opportunity for patients to optimize their functionality through an intensive interdisciplinary therapeutic program" (USC Arcadia Hospital, 2023).

Identified Needs

1. Education and resources for therapists
2. Education and resources for nurses
3. Education and resources for caregivers

Literature Review

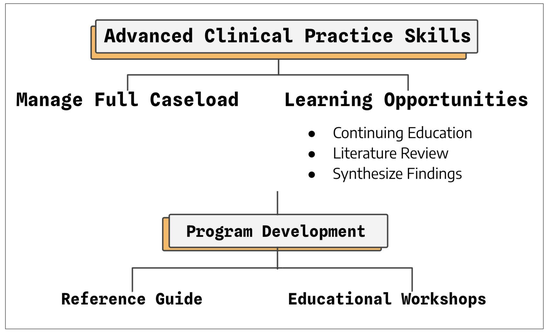
- **Acute Inpatient Rehabilitation**
  - Effective in improving functional outcomes after acute disability or injury with functional gains in mobility, daily activity, and applied cognitive function compared to clients treated in skilled nursing facilities (Chan et al., 2013)
- **Newly graduated and Novice Occupational Therapists**
  - Occupation-based practice is lacking because novice OTs are not yet automatic in clinical reasoning, have limited knowledge and experience for specific conditions, and are still adapting to the protocols of the workplace (Di Tommaso et al., 2019).
- **Need in Hospitals**
  - Therapists need continuing education beyond basic education programs to build and maintain skills for complex conditions (Emerich et al., 2012).

Student Learning Objectives

1. Develop advanced clinical skills in the ARU beyond entry-level
2. Develop a reference guide for OT practitioners in the ARU to use for future reference
3. Implement a series of (2) workshops for OT practitioners to promote the carry-over of knowledge and skills addressed in the reference guide

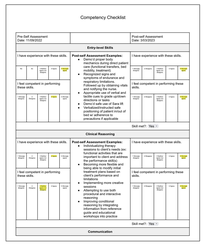
Project Description & Implementation

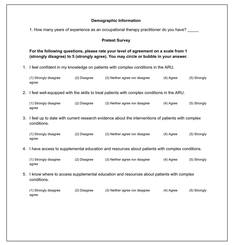
- **Problem Statement:** Novice OTs within this setting are struggling with implementing occupation-based practice and skill acquisition to treat clients with complex needs because they need to balance and overcome challenges in foundational skills, clinical reasoning, therapeutic use of self, meeting institutional requirements, and productivity expectations
  - **There is a need to bridge the gap between novice to expert practitioners**
- **Purpose:** gain clinical practice skills beyond entry-level to become proficient in the acute rehabilitation setting with sufficient knowledge to develop an educational resource program for novice OT practitioners
  - Emphasis on **complex client populations** (criteria derived from needs assessment)
- **Primary Focus Area: Advanced clinical practice skills**
  - Manage a full caseload
  - Build upon and reinforce knowledge/ skills into practice
  - Participate in learning opportunities
- **Secondary Focus Area: Program Development**
  - Transfer of knowledge
  - **Resource Guide:** Clinical presentations, symptoms, healing stages, functional impairments, implications for OT, and treatment protocols for complex client populations
  - **Educational Workshops:** Present and reinforce the knowledge and skills addressed in the reference guide



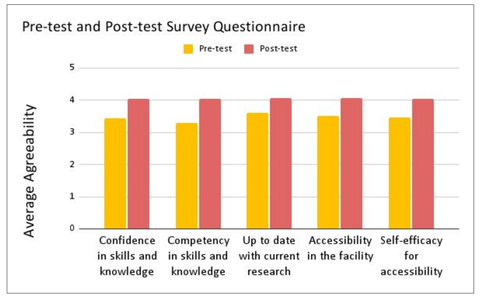
Outcomes & Evaluation

- **Competency checklist**
  - Increase in self-perceived clinical reasoning skills and confidence
  - 300+ hours of direct patient care
- **Pre/post-test Questionnaire**
  - 7 participants
  - 4 OTR/L, 2 COTA/L, 1 level II fieldwork student


Competency Checklist

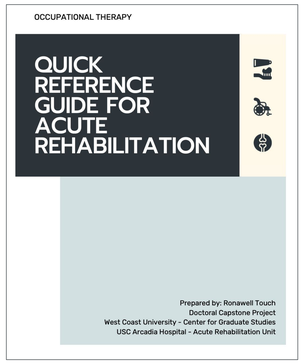

Demographic Information

Pre-test and Post-test Survey Questionnaire



  - P-values measured to be > 0.005 & between 0.05 and 0.10, indicating the educational program had a positive impact on confidence, competency, & self-efficacy
- **Face-to-face interviews**
  - *"Helpful for students due to the fast paced environment of the ARU."*
  - *"In-depth picture of appropriate interventions."*
  - *"Organized and easy to review information."*

Scholarly Deliverables



Conclusion

- Outcomes of the project provide support for the use of supplemental education and resources to meet the learning needs of novice therapists, which in turn, will improve the role of OT in acute rehabilitation
- **Limitations:** Time constraints for elaborate training and the opportunity to assess the effectiveness of the program over time
- **Implications of OT:** Future students should build on the program to promote continued learning and transfer of knowledge
  - Promotes the role of OTs as lifelong learners
  - Maximizes opportunities for all clients to receive adequate OT services

Acknowledgements

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References available upon request