



Enhancing Optometry Resident Education: Optimizing Low Vision Referrals

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DCE SITE DESCRIPTION

Tibor Rubin Veteran Affairs (VA) Medical Center

- Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS) offers various services to veterans & active duty service members with a visual impairment.
- Staff include Optometrists, Certified Low Vision Therapists (CLVT), Blind Rehabilitation Outpatient Specialists (BROS), and the Visual Impairment Services Team (VIST).
- Mission: “The mission of the Blind Rehabilitation Service (BRS) is to assist eligible Veterans & active duty service members with a visual impairment in developing the skills needed for personal independence & successful reintegration into the community and family environment”

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Various barriers to low vision services exist, with inconsistent referral patterns being one of them (Khimani et al., 2021).
- There is a lack of familiarity with low-vision services among eye care professionals (ECP); according to one study, only 78% of ECPs know of low-vision services (Khimani et al., 2021).
- Patients also report a lack of knowledge of low-vision services or have never been referred (Shah et al., 2018).
- Implementing client-centered practices was shown to improve patient skills & meet their goals (Shah et al., 2018).
- Referring to low vision rehabilitation early in the eye disease course allows for improved acceptance of interventions and services (Shah et al., 2018).
- Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance Model is the guiding model to ensure multifaceted interdisciplinary care for a shared client (Bass et al., 2015).

SUMMARY OF NEEDS

- Create informational materials for optometry residents & students to improve referral rates & ensure alignment with the client’s needs.
- Expand & update quick reference materials on assistive devices for easy use by staff 7 students.
- Improve referrals to the low-vision optometry team from medical doctors or allied health professionals.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Develop an optometry resident education program on low vision rehabilitation.
- Implement & evaluate the optometry resident education program.
- Complete 350 hours of advanced clinical skill in low vision therapy to be eligible to take the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation & Education Professionals exam.

SCHOLARLY DELIVERABLES

- Low Vision Device Handbook
- Blind Rehabilitation Services: A Reference Guide for Optometry Residents and Students

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Blind Rehabilitation Services: A Reference Guide for Optometry Residents and Students

- Surveyed a total of five optometry residents and students to find the gap in knowledge between Low Vision Optometry & Blind Rehabilitation Services.
- Composed a handbook that supports scopes of practices, clinical reasoning, and clinical indications for blind rehabilitative services across eight areas.



Low Vision Devices: Guide and Resource Book

- Provides an overview, key information & functionality, clinical considerations, & prescription indications on assistive devices available at the Long Beach VA to support visually impaired patients and enhance interdisciplinary referrals.



Blind Rehabilitation Services: A Reference Guide for Optometry Residents and Students

- Completed 350+ hours of clinical skill in low vision therapy to provide educational materials to be used by current & future optometry students & residents as well as future CLVT interns and OT students.

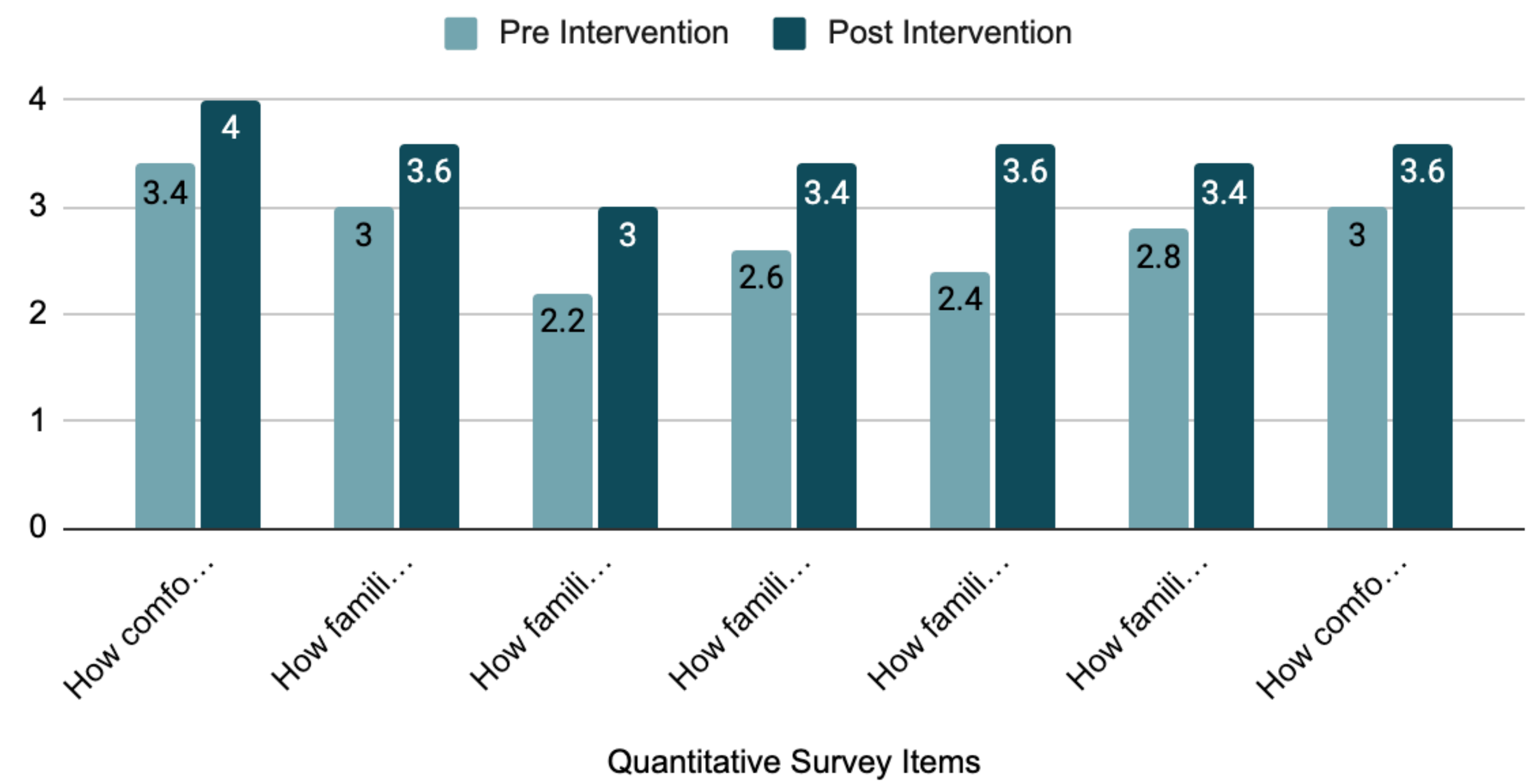
PROJECT EVALUATION & OUTCOMES

Five optometry residents & students who had a rotation in low vision at the VA were surveyed with eight quantitative & two qualitative questions in the pre and post-test survey. Overall, it was noted that this project positively impacted participants’ confidence & knowledge in providing Low Vision care, particularly in understanding available devices & rehabilitation services.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

Table 1

Means of Pre/Post Survey



QUALITATIVE RESULTS: THEMES

Eligibility/Appropriateness of Services

- “Making sure patient qualifies from service or would benefit from service.”

Education on Available Services

- “Have a list of services each referral service offers so that new low-vision doctors may have an easier time recommending services.”
- “A day where residents, externs, staff, and doctors could tour facilities and equipment to better understand what is available and how it would benefit the patient.”

Clarity & Consistency

- “I think that this handbook is very well written. Great job.”

OT IMPLICATIONS

- Interprofessional collaboration among the optometry team & other low-vision allied health providers.
- Focus on functional impact on activities of daily living (ADLS) & instrumental activities of daily living (IADLS).
- Use of assistive technology, adaptive strategies, & psychosocial considerations in interventions.

CONCLUSION

Integrating this occupational therapy student’s capstone project into the Low Vision Optometry Department at the Tibor Rubin VA improved education for optometry residents & students while ultimately enhancing referrals & care for visually impaired veterans.

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REFERENCES

