Abstract

Interprofessional education (IPE) is a collaborative learning experience and process amongst health professionals that improves patient outcomes. Limited data exists on IPE that specifically includes Occupational Therapy (OT). This study evaluates a unique integration of OT into formed interprofessional student teams through a 90-minute didactic presentation on OT and the integration of an OT consultant into interprofessional didactic sessions during patient interactions. Interprofessional teams are part of Vanderbilt Program in Interprofessional Learning (VPIL) comprised of medical, nursing, social work, and pharmacy students. This is a study measuring the educational impact of a novel teaching unit conducted at Vanderbilt University, a private academic and research university in Nashville, Tennessee.

VPIL Partnership: Students from multiple disciplines including medicine, nursing, pharmacy, divinity, and social work participate in interdisciplinary teams to learn best practice, deliver patient care under supervision from licensed professionals, and incorporate interprofessional considerations into their own professional practice. Through the “collaborative innovative program, students will contribute to the care of patients in meaningful ways while working in interprofessional teams” (VPIL, 2018). The VPIL cohort learns through group seminars and in interprofessional teams of 4 members. Teams observe and provide patient care under the supervision and leadership of a licensed physician or nurse practitioner.

Objectives

- Increase VPIL student’s knowledge of OT scope of practice, interventions, and goals.
- Increase future practitioners ability to make appropriate referrals and utilize OT services.
- Create an interactive opportunity for students to consider OT intervention benefits.
- Cultivate respect and inclusivity in growing IPC teams.
- Assess perceptions of participants related to the impact of OT integration into curriculum and experience.

Methods

OT inclusion into VPIL program included a didactic curriculum addition and experiential interaction opportunity with OT consultant. 1. OT lecturer presented two identical 90-minute lectures to VPIL students (n=43). Didactic curriculum provided included: lecture presentation, interactive stations with props, case studies, and reflection. 2. VPIL students (n=15) interacted with an OT consultant in IPE student teams during patient interactions and group meetings one day a week for 2 weeks. Interactions allowed for personal interaction with OT, discussion of OT scope of practice, education on appropriate OT interventions, and unique case-specific OT considerations. Practice settings included: inpatient acute cardiology, outpatient alternative medicine clinic, outpatient pediatric clinic, and adult primary care clinic. VPIL students completed voluntary, anonymous pre and post-OTD curriculum experience survey and post OTD experience survey. Surveys rated students’ perceived knowledge about OT, confidence related to appropriate referrals to OT, and description of their knowledge about OT.

Analysis

- SPSS software was used to evaluate pre and post curriculum experience data. A Mann Whitney U test was used for non-parametric data. The mean change between pre and post experience surveys indicates statistical significance was found at the p = 0.000 level.
- Narrative responses from surveys were transcribed into Excel. Responses were examined to find frequently reoccurring words and themes and sorted into groups based on accuracy and positivity.

Results

Significant change between pre and post OT curriculum experience survey indicates an increase in knowledge of OT, application of information, and ability to integrate OT into interprofessional practice resulted from OT didactic curriculum delivery and inclusion of OT into VPIL interprofessional teams. 100% of narrative responses on the experiential post survey were found to be accurate and/or positive signifying an increased sense of interprofessional collaboration that fortifies learning.

- “When I first met the OT [consultant], I was not confident in what OT was, or what they did for patients. Over the past two weeks she has been very informative and helpful in the clinic. I now have a better understanding and appreciation for OT.”
- “I think more professionals need to be informed about OT and what it has to offer for patients.”
- “I began with no knowledge on OT. I learned what it was, how it is implemented, and a little bit about the career path.”
- “I definitely understand that maybe not all clinics will benefit from OT but I definitely believe that our [cardiac surgery] team would benefit from having an OT, especially with regards to discharge and where a patient should be post-op.”
- “[The OT consultant] blended well with the team, she asked several good questions that facilitated learning of the whole team. I look forward to learning more about Occupational Therapy.”

Following the OT consultant integration into VPIL teams 90% of students rate their overall experience with the OT consultant as “excellent”. 100% of students classified the experiences as “informative” or “very informative”. 100% of students indicated they are “very likely” to consult to or refer to OTs in their professional career.

Summary & Discussion

This novel study was the first of its kind to assess an IPE session and experience solely aimed to educate IPC teams on OT. Through curriculum and experience students learned about OT scope of practice, possible interventions, and examples of appropriate referrals. The integration of OT into the VPIL program was beneficial for the VPIL students and professionals that interacted with and learned from OT interactions. A sustainable addition of therapy into VPIL curriculum design allows for the continued growth of IPC within VPIL and other similar organizations. We hope to continue to encourage collaboration of OT between medicine, nursing, social work, and pharmacy professions in hopes that the relationships will remain in future practice and ultimately increase patient function and quality of life. Professionals working together will improve patient care and the long-term management of health conditions.

Figure 1: Pre and Post-Curriculum Survey Mean Change Results

Figure 2: Comparison between Pre and Post Curriculum experience survey data

Figure 3: Pre and Post-Curriculum survey data indicating students existing knowledge of OT.

Figure 4: Post-survey word cloud depicting commonly used words to describe students existing knowledge of OT.

Sponsoring Institution: Belmont University & Vanderbilt University

Julie Wofford RN, OTD/S & Heather Davidson PhD