

Promoting and Sharing Fieldwork: The Canadian Model of Quality Assurance and Exchange

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Introduction: Canada, a country with large geographical boundaries and a dispersed population has developed a unique system to equitably share available practice education resources across Canadian occupational therapy universities. A national quality assurance program for fieldwork sites and an on-line teaching platform have provided ways to enhance the fieldwork teaching/learning experience. These structures and processes have contributed to the experience of our graduates and our educators in the field and will be described in this presentation.

Objectives: To enhance quality assurance of practice education/ fieldwork learning outcomes, national standards for fieldwork sites were developed. In addition, on-line learning platforms were designed to facilitate preceptor and student teaching and learning.

Description/Report : A National Placement Service provides a structure for students to access occupational therapy placements across the country. Students utilize learning opportunities in practice education sites that are reviewed using a national fieldwork site approval document (CGFE-OT) developed and utilized by Occupational Therapy academic programs. Canadian preceptors and students join on-line communities of learning to develop in their roles within the practice education experience. To date, there are 3 English learning platforms and 1 French platform.

Results/Discussion: Despite individual curricula, the system of national quality shared by Canadian university programs enables occupational therapy students to learn in a variety of settings that might not otherwise be available to them in their own local university-based area. This system enables students to see local and national differentiation of services and cultures as well as develop their own professional identity within the broader context. University collaboration provides a way to share resources and to strengthen fieldwork program development across universities.

Conclusion: The national group of university fieldwork members continues to develop, monitor and refine these quality assurance initiatives.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: Accreditation bodies continually strive for quality improvement of services and programs. It is hoped that the practices developed in the Canadian context can be examined as other countries develop their own quality assurance programs to enhance the quality of fieldwork education practices. Moreover, the sharing of resources permits students greater mobility internationally.