

0608

## **Brief Exposure to Cultural Education in an Introductory OT Course Improves Cultural Sensitivity of Students**

Emily Haltiwanger

*University of Texas at El Paso, El Paso, Texas, United States*

Introduction: OT graduate students taking their first introductory course had a challenging unit on culture issues that led to high level thinking. Content explored cultural diversity, health disparities, social injustice, leading to cultural sensitivity. Unit objectives were to demonstrate student ability to identify OT Problems through application of the OT Framework, OT process and cultural competency models to case studies of people with disabling conditions and to explore different cultures and identify similarities between people of different cultures. Specific assignments were: 1) a group oral presentation describing one specific culture 2) a case study written assignment completed by students individually and presented to the group. Experiential learning: Students worked in small groups to identify superficial characteristics of cultures such as dance, art, humor, games, foods, and the more hidden characteristics of health care beliefs, attitudes, religious practices, and mistrust for professionals, etc. They studied cultures of health disparity groups and selected other cultures present in the U.S. population. Students used a grant-funded website called WHISSL Linkage, developed by the School of Allied Health at University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston, Texas. Using this site for self-study, they found and explored case studies of individuals of different cultural backgrounds with disabling conditions. There were links to tutorials, PubMed research, and videos. Method: The effect of the brief cross-cultural education unit on 14 participants was assessed using pretest/ two posttest scores at 1 week and 9 months, on the following four points: 1) Inventory for Assessing the Process of Cultural Competence Among Healthcare Professionals-Revised© standardized questionnaire, 2) Scores on a teacher-designed case-based cultural quiz 3) Themes derived from reflective writings and discussions 4) Reflections about their continued desire to synthesize and evaluate the impact of cultural issues with clients in subsequent classes. Results: Significant changes in domains of openness, empathy/cultural desire, tolerance of others, cultural awareness, knowledge, skill, and encounters occurred when evaluating the effect size and qualitative themes. Conclusion: Course content had durable effects on desire, attitude, awareness and sensitivity early in the curriculum that may lead to development of culturally-sensitive workforce. Contribution: Early evidence of student cultural sensitivity.