

“What’s the Difference Between Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy?” How a Student-Led Inter-Professional Outreach Clinic Addresses This Question

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Introduction

Background: Historically, the delineation between Occupational and Physical Therapy (OT and PT) practice roles has been a source of misperception. Confusion between OT and PT scope of practice becomes readily evident in collaborative learning environments, such as at the Indiana University Student Outreach Clinic (IU SOC); a student-led interprofessional pro-bono clinic in Indianapolis, IN.

Problem: Clearly defining and communicating the roles of OT and PT for allocation of patients with various conditions has presented a challenge in this setting. The value of inter-professional education (IPE) is evident in the literature; however, limited research exists discussing the impact of pro bono clinical work on student understanding of professional roles.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to examine student perceptions about the differences and similarities between Occupational and Physical Therapy. The study also aims to determine students’ readiness to participate in interprofessional education (IPE) activities that will occur between the graduate programs, primarily through student participation at IUSOC

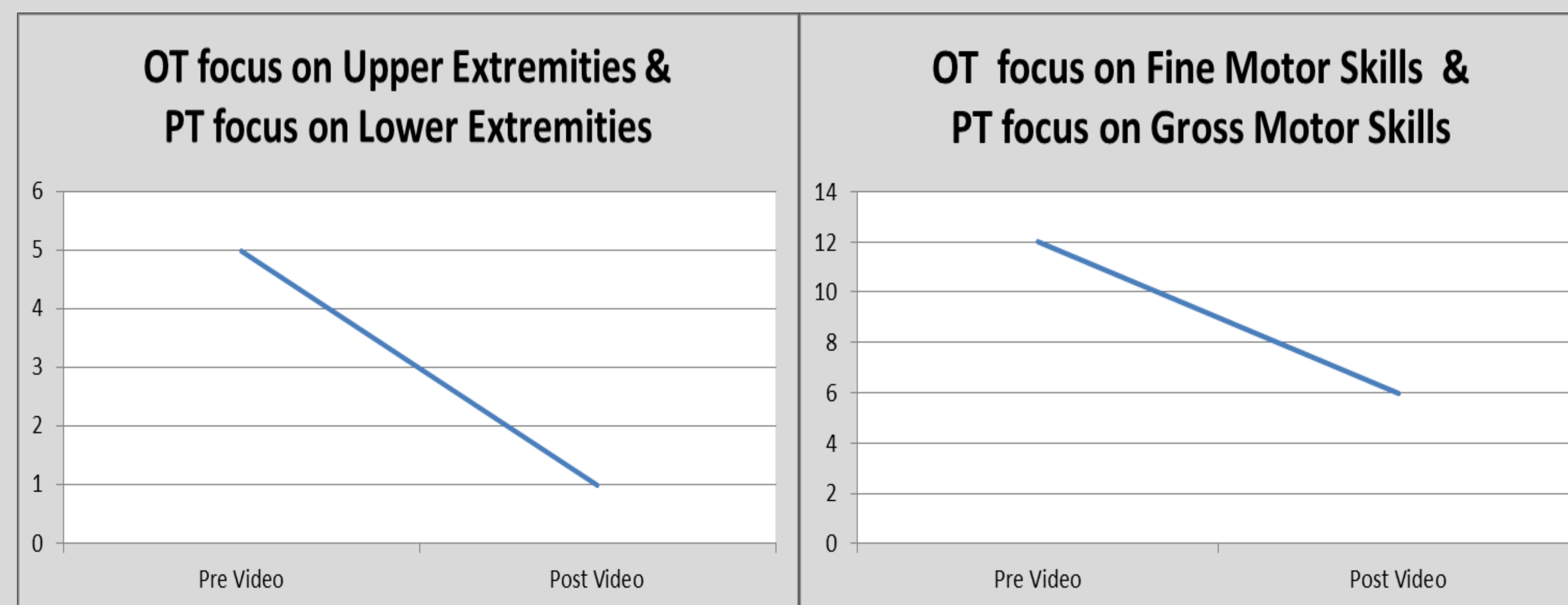
Outcomes

Quantitative Results:

IU SOC OT PT IPEP Pre-Post Video Survey Responses				
	OT		PT	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
Indicate the extent of your knowledge about the <u>educational requirements</u> of:	Aver: 2.8 SD: 1.06	Aver: 2.96 SD: 2.96 $p < 0.09$	Aver: 3.16 SD: 1.12	Aver: 3.23 SD: 0.99 $p < 0.40$
Indicate the extent for your knowledge about the <u>scope of practice, in general</u> of:	Aver: 2.48 SD: 1.11	Aver: 3.25 SD: 0.62 $p < 0.000$	Aver: 2.63 SD: 1.26	Aver: 3.43 SD: 0.77 $p < 0.000$
Indicate the extent of your knowledge about the scope of practice specifically <u>at IUSOC</u> of:	Aver: 1.16 SD: 1.04	Aver: 3.16 SD: 0.77 $p < 0.000$	Aver: 1.15 SD: 1.04	Aver: 3.15 SD: 0.82 $p < 0.000$
Indicate the extent you are <u>comfortable discussing the differences</u> in the scope of practice of:	Aver: 2.23 SD: 1.05	Aver: 3.05 SD: 0.81 $p < 0.000$	Aver: 2.21 SD: 1.18	Aver: 3.15 SD: 0.85 $p < 0.000$
Indicate the extent of your <u>understanding the importance of Interprofessional Education and Practice</u> to deliver the highest quality of care.	Pre: Aver: 2.95 SD: 0.84	Post: Aver: 3.79 SD: 0.41 $p < 0.000$		

n = 75 (97.4% response rate)

Qualitative Results: Changes in Misconceptions and Biases



“Occupational therapy is aimed towards giving the client a better understanding of their functional capabilities and how they can manage their health in a better way.....Physical therapy focuses on treating the actual injury of a patient that directly affects him physically and preventing further injury”.

“Physical therapy looks to treat the actual impairment of the patient...while Occupational therapy helps the patient complete necessary everyday tasks with the impairment....”

"These practices are very similar. Both work to improve function in clients and can see clients for similar problems, but the types of interventions used vary."

Methods

A consensus document on OT and PT education and scope of practice and a video highlighting the delineation of roles and collaborative practice at the IU SOC were developed by OT and PT student board members and faculty advisors. Within a month of program entry, 1st year students in the OT and PT programs were asked to review the document and video as an ungraded class assignment. Pre- post survey data was collected, including the Attitudes Towards Health Care Teams² and a Likert scale developed to explore student knowledge of OT and PT professions’ educational background and scope of practice.

Discussion & Conclusion

Quantitative and qualitative results indicate the benefits of utilizing an IPE approach, in conjunction with an online training module, and a consensus document to illustrate the different scopes of practice between OT and PT professions. First year OT and PT graduate professional students demonstrated:

- ❖ **significantly improved understanding** of the general scope of practices among both professions,
- ❖ **significantly improved knowledge** regarding the scope of practice among OT and PT at the IU Student Outreach Clinic,
- ❖ **significantly improved comfort** discussing the differences in the scope of practices,
- ❖ **significantly improved recognition** to the importance of IPEP to deliver the highest quality of care regardless of one’s profession

The results support utilization of IPE approaches early in graduate health professional education to enhance students’ understanding of role delineation and collaborative practice. Using an online training module enriches preparation to participate within a collaborative learning environment such as at the Indiana University Student Outreach Clinic.

Consensus Document & Online Training Module

A consensus document, video and online training module were developed and implemented to help students at IU SOC define and clearly communicate distinctions between the OT and PT professions. These tools were created in collaboration by OT and PT students to facilitate conversations about appropriate patient allocation and referral.

IUSOC Occupational Therapy (OT) & Physical Therapy (PT) Consensus Document	
<p>Goal of PT at IUSOC: To improve movement and alleviate pain, identify health risk factors, and enhance function and mobility for a variety of neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, and cardiopulmonary conditions.</p> <p>Evaluation skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Differential Diagnosis of Musculoskeletal and Neuromuscular Pain and Movement DysfunctionBalance AssessmentFall Risk AssessmentPosture and Gait Assessment <p>Treatment skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Posture and movement re-educationTherapeutic exerciseFunctional mobility trainingBalance interventionsGait training w/ two assistive devicesManual techniques for soft tissue dysfunction and neurological painModalities as indicatedTreatment of disc protrusion and impingementPost-operative rehabilitationPelvic floor rehabilitationHome Exercise Program and Self-care instructions <p>Integratory care is included in the Physical Therapy practice act but is not practiced at IUSOC</p> <p>Revised May 2015</p>	<p>Goal of OT at IUSOC: To enhance individual’s performance, throughout the lifespan, within areas of occupation including: activities of daily living (ADLs), instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs), rest and sleep, education, work, play, leisure and social participation for a variety of neuromuscular, musculoskeletal, cognitive and psychosocial conditions.</p> <p>Evaluation skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Obtain client:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Roles (worker, parent, etc.)InterestsPatterns of living (habits)Values, Needs, StrengthsAnalysis of occupational performance:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Observe occupational performance (function, movement, cognition) to consider supports and barriers <p>Treatment skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Education and training:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Medication managementSmoking cessationSleep hygieneSelf-care managementHome managementWorkplace or community reintegrationAdaptation strategies for functional independence through:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assistive technologyAdaptive devicesEnergy conservationErgonomicsModalities as indicatedSplinting for joint protection, mobilization, and improved occupational performance <p>Revised May 2015</p>

References

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2. Heinemann, G., Schmitt, M., Farrell, M., and Brallier, S.,(1999). Development Of An Attitudes Towards Health Care Teams Scale. Evaluations and the Health Professions, 22(1),March 1999, 123-142.

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