

# Barwon Health Occupational Therapy Enhanced Practice Education Model (BHOTEPEM): Student Perspectives

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## Introduction

- The Barwon Health Occupational Therapy Enhanced Practice Education Model (BHOTEPEM) was created to support occupational therapy students during practice education.
- The BHOTEPEM was developed through a collaborative partnership between Barwon Health, Deakin University and Charles Sturt University and based on a thorough evaluation of elements that contributed to high quality practice education.
- The aim of this research was to evaluate occupational therapy students responses to individual elements of the BHOTEPEM.
- The individual elements evaluated included:
  - a consistent student orientation process (welcome pack, caseload orientation document, expectations document & group orientation)
  - facilitated practicums (practical group sessions that support practicing & grading skills in a safe environment. Topics include professional communication, documentation, cognition, mental health & home modifications)
  - group facilitated reflective practice sessions (using probing questions)

## Method

- This study utilised surveys administered electronically to collect data
- Open questions were used to collect qualitative data
- 5-point Likert scales and yes/no questions were used to collect quantitative data
- Ethical approval for this project was granted

## References

- Larkin, H. & Pépin, G. (2013). Becoming a reflective practitioner. In K. Stagnitti, A. Schoo & D. Welch. Clinical and Fieldwork Placement in the Health Professions (2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., pp 31-42). Melbourne, Australia: Oxford University Press.
- Pépin, G. (2017). Reflecting on practice. In M. Curtin, M. Egan, & J Adams. Occupational Therapy for People Experiencing Illness, Injury or Impairment: Promoting Occupation and Participation (7<sup>th</sup> Ed., pp. 781-788). Edinburgh, UK: Elsevier.
- Rodgers, S., Fitzgerald, C., Davila, W., Millar, F. and Allison, H. (2011). What makes a quality occupational therapy practice placement? Students' and practice educators' perspectives. Australian Occupational Therapy Journal. 58(3): 195-202.

## Results

- 36 occupational therapy students out of possible 125 responded to the survey (response rate of 29.8%)
- Students indicated that the Model was successful in enabling them to:
  - feel welcome and prepared for placement
  - to develop their practice skills & abilities
  - to develop their reflective practice skills
- 97% of students indicated that the orientation process increased their feelings of preparedness for placement

"The whole [welcome] package provided a number of valuable resources"

- 86% of students provided a rating of good, excellent or optimal, when asked if they were able to apply what they had learnt at the facilitated practicums to their placement

"[The ability] to practice skills without the pressure from real life situations"

- 89% of students agreed that the reflective practice sessions encouraged them to reflect on their placement experiences

"Through observing and participating, it was beneficial to see how the process helped people to see things from a different perspective...we can now use this strategy in future"

## Discussion

- The BHOTEPEM supported key elements of a quality practice education experience for occupational therapy students as identified by Rodgers et al. (2011). In particular the key elements of:
  - A welcoming learning environment;
  - Detailed orientation and clear expectations; and
  - A graded program of learning experiences.
- The Model also supported suggestions by Larkin & Pépin (2013) and Pépin (2017) that developing reflective practice skills is a key element in practice improvement.

## Conclusion

- The Victoria Best Practice Clinical Learning Environments Policy requires health networks to be accountable for the quality of the practice education experiences provided
- A consideration is the provision of quality learning experiences to justify the payment for placement
- In response, Barwon Health developed the BHOTEPEM that has led to quality practice education learning experiences for students

## Recommendations

These findings suggest that other placement sites may be able to enhance the quality of their student placements by:

- Developing and implementing an orientation process that welcomes students and provides clear expectations.
- Providing students with key information required to prepare for their placement.
- Facilitating the development of student practice skills in a safe and supported way that complements work experiences.
- Providing an opportunity to facilitate the development of reflective practice skills.

