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Clinical Skills Centre: Possibilities for the Training of South African Occupational Therapists

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Context: In Great Britain most of the existing clinical skills centres (CSC's) have developed due to changing healthcare policies, curricular initiatives and an increasing emphasis on quality assessment and competencies. CSC's are well developed for training of medical doctors and nursing staff. Limited information exists on CSC's for training of Occupational Therapy (OT) students. Three training centres in the Netherlands have developed material for OT training and used this with positive outcomes, which was confirmed by a personal visit. Personal communication with all the training centres in South Africa (SA) warranted further investigation.

Aims: This study investigated the possibilities of using CSC's as part of OT training in SA.

Methods: The data for this descriptive study was obtained by means of two questionnaires (a preliminary questionnaire and a questionnaire for the Delphi survey). The preliminary questionnaire was used to determine the items to be included in the Delphi questionnaire. Eleven statements with different options were included in the Delphi questionnaire. Eleven (of 15) fulltime academic staff members of the Department of Occupational Therapy, University of the Free State, completed the preliminary questionnaire. Six of a possible eight training centres participated in the Delphi survey. Ethical approval was obtained to conduct the investigation.

Results: After round one of the Delphi survey adaptations were made to options not reaching 80% consensus. Consensus was reached on all eleven statements after two rounds of the survey. Final results showed that a CSC has training possibilities for training of OT students, including definite teaching aims and added value for students and staff. Numerous OT procedures, learning of the application of tools for assessment and teaching of intervention skills are possible in a CSC. The learning environment, however, should be suitable for the SA population. Utilising a CSC to its full potential will need additional planning and resources.

Conclusions: Establishing a CSC will contribute positively to the learning experience of OT students and create learning opportunities that ensure quality training in certain aspects of the curriculum.