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A monitoring tool for the development of clinical competencies: From conceptual stages to ongoing use

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Introduction: Fieldwork needs to be structured in such a way that theory and practice can be integrated and progress can be monitored throughout practicum experiences. The authors have developed a monitoring tool drawn from a national competency profile, adult education principles and an educational program's student centered approach.

Objective: The objective of this presentation is to provide an overview of the tool's development and implementation stages, as to present preliminary outcomes related to student supervision and learning.

Description: The context and conceptual foundations leading to the development of the monitoring tool will be described. The six steps leading to the tool's development will be presented, i.e. reflection and brainstorming, literature search, development of content and format, validation of content by a panel of experts, implementation sequence and revisions based on feedback. Finally, the tool's seven sections will be outlined i.e. user guide, learning contract, competency development monitoring chart, table of personal learning objectives, summary of weekly supervision meetings, end-of-placement summary, and continuing education plan.

Discussion: This tool, in use since January 2008 by both students and fieldwork educators, has provided numerous opportunities to reinforce communication, reflect on professional growth, and make students aware of issues related to competency development. The tool prepares OT students to enter practice in a regulated profession where accountability and continuing education are key elements. Feedback from users and recommendations to adapt this tool for different educational programs needs will be discussed.

Conclusion: This competency development monitoring tool was developed to structure the fieldwork experiences of OT students. It is based on national documents and adult education principles. Its content, development, implementation, adaptability and impact will be discussed.

Contribution to the education and practice of occupational therapists: This competency-based monitoring tool integrates concepts valued by the profession. It prepares well-rounded practitioners mainly because it shifts the focus from performance evaluation to a self-directed reflexive learning and quality improvement frame of reference. This tool can be used by students, practitioners changing fields of practice and individuals returning to the profession who are seeking guidance in their ongoing professional development.