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Focus on Professional Development in the Occupational Therapy Programme

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Introduction: The Occupational Therapy Programme at the Faculty of Health Sciences, Linköping University in Sweden is applying different teaching methods within the Problem-Based Learning (PBL) philosophy, such as case studies, tutorial groups, portfolio system before each practical placement, inter-professional learning and role-play. The last evaluations have shown the need of putting emphasis on professional development, when using the teaching methods. In the latest curriculum change this has been done with support from the Intentional Relationship Model (IRM) (Taylor, 2008). Research support this need by showing that occupational therapists perceive being professional in therapist-client interactions is developed after the occupational therapy education is finished (Cole & McLean, 2003; Taylor, 2009).

Objectives: The objective is to examine how occupational therapy students develop their professional client relations while undergoing the occupational therapy education at the faculty of Health Sciences at Linköping University, Sweden.

Methods: A longitudinal design has been used. Students fill in a Self-Assessment Modes Questionnaire (Taylor, 2008) regarding the use of therapeutic modes in professional client relations. It is filled in at three different occasions during the three year long education. In total 120 students have filled in the questionnaire. Observation of students is also used based on the use of therapeutic modes.

Results: The result will be presented based on the six therapeutic modes in the IRM and with a longitudinal perspective on the professional development.

Conclusion: It has been shown that IRM as a model and the questionnaire can support the development of the professional therapeutic relationship together with the teaching methods used. Further research must be developed.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: In research occupational therapists have identified the professional therapeutic relationship as vital to the outcomes of therapy (Taylor, 2009). The IRM model can contribute to the development of becoming a professional occupational therapist and by that influence the evidence in occupational therapy. Practicing occupational therapists may also benefit from using the model.