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Development and assessment of professional behavior of Occupational Therapy students in a competence based curriculum

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To acquire occupational therapy competences, OT universities need to offer students a motivating and challenging learning environment. Knowledge and skills are strongly interdependent with professional behavior.

Professional behavior can be defined as concrete observable behavior, based on the values and norms of the profession. It is the unique combination of personal qualities, life experience and professional experience. Professional behavior can be distinguished into three different domains:

- - dealing with task/work;
- - dealing with others
- - dealing with personal performance.

Professional behavior can be supervised, taught and evaluated, and therefore deserves to occupy a specific position in health-care education.

Knowledge, skills and professional behavior ultimately determine the quality of professional activities. Knowledge and skills have been effectively translated into educational and assessment programmes. The need to identify and promote students' professional behavior is recognized, but professional behavior is more difficult to educate and evaluate, and has been largely neglected.

The competence based, student centered OT curriculum of Hogeschool Zuyd (Netherlands) offers students opportunities to become aware of the strengths and weaknesses in their professional behavior, to discuss and reflect on that behavior and to address and ameliorate their insufficiencies as part of their preclinical and clinical educational experiences.

These opportunities are integrated in various didactical approaches as Problem Based Learning, project learning and skills training (skills lab method) throughout the program.

As the result of a master study in Health Profession Education, an assessment instrument for professional behavior is developed and tested. There are significant correlations in scores for professional behavior between scores by educators and by supervisors in clinical practice. This assessment instrument is available in Dutch, German and English.

In this presentation an introduction will be offered on the concept of professional behavior and our experiences with a systematic and structured supervision and evaluation of professional behavior within our program, leading to the development, use and scientific evaluation of this assessment instrument

There also will be a focus on the possibilities for development and evaluation of professional behavior of students. A discussion about the usefulness of the PBA instrument for international curricula is welcome.