

1551

Enhancing the value of university based debriefing sessions relating to clinical placements for occupational therapy students.

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Introduction:

The University of Sydney on campus debriefing sessions are an integral component of the occupational therapy student's clinical placement experience. Traditionally, debriefing sessions are conducted at the completion of a student's clinical placement. Feedback from graduating students has questioned the timing and subsequent value of these debriefing sessions.

Objectives:

To evaluate the differences in occupational therapy student's perceived value of debriefing based on when the debriefing session is conducted in relation to their clinical placement.

Methods:

90 occupational therapy students were randomly allocated into two groups. One group received debriefing at the end of their clinical placement and the other group received debriefing in the middle of their clinical placement. Questionnaires and focus groups were used to collect data regarding student value of the debriefing sessions. Data was collected from both groups prior to student placement, in the middle (after one group had received debriefing) and at the completion of placement (after the second group received debriefing). Data were analysed by independent raters comparing results for the two groups.

Results:

Preliminary results of focus group discussions have found differences in the way students value debriefing sessions based on the timing of the sessions in relation to their clinical placement. Those that received debriefing in the middle of their clinical placement valued the debriefing sessions more than those that received debriefing at the end of their clinical placement. It is hypothesised that the questionnaire results will support these findings.

Conclusion:

The timing of on campus debriefing sessions appears to impact on the student's perceived value of the sessions. It is important to consider the timing of debriefing sessions in order to maximise the value that students place on the sessions and enhance their overall clinical experience.

Contribution to the practice/evidence of occupational therapy:

Results will enable best practice guidelines for clinical educators when supporting occupational therapy students on clinical placements.