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Facilitating Interprofessional and Culturally-Competent Patient Care through Experiential Learning in China

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The American Occupational Therapy Association calls for occupational therapy a globally connected and diverse workforce to meet occupational need. Other health care professions such as physical therapy and nursing have also stressed the importance of providing culturally competent patient care. Implementation of such vision is accomplished partially through students' participation in didactic coursework, discussions and clinical simulations. Immersion in international experiences has been also shown promising impact on student professional development. The China Honors Interprofessional Program (CHIP) at a university in USA is designed to increase students' cultural competency and professional development. From 2009 to 2013, a total of 25 professional students including twelve occupational therapy students, ten physical therapy students, and three nursing students were enrolled in the program. A mixed methods approach was used for this study. The quantitative research component used a one group pre and post test design in which participants were asked to respond to three instruments before and after the CHIP experience, the Interprofessional Education Perception Scale, the modified Team Skills Scale and the Cultural Competence Health Practitioner Assessment. The qualitative research portion was conducted through participant reflections and focus group discussions at the end of the program. Results of the study revealed that CHIP has positive impact on participants' cultural competency and professional development including clinical reasoning, team work, and increased understanding of contribution of other health care providers. These skills enhance the ability for graduates of healthcare professions to be more well-rounded and competent in providing quality care to diverse patient populations.