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Implementing a Clinical Practicum Experience: Impact on Occupational Therapy Student Development

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Experiential learning has been found to increase student confidence, interaction skills, clinical reasoning, professional behavior and self-direction. Literature suggests when this learning occurs early in the curriculum it increases the likelihood of student development and success.

The purpose of this presentation is to describe a unique clinical practicum experience that complements didactic learning in one Master of Science in occupational therapy program and explore its impact on program outcomes.

At the end of this session participants will be able to:

1. Describe the clinical practicum experience,
2. Identify how this experience reinforces classroom learning objectives,
3. Summarize the benefits of this experience on students and program outcomes.

The clinical practicum occurs during the first three terms of the OT program. Student expectations are presented at the beginning of each term and completed under the mentorship of a clinical educator. Students are assessed on clinical skills and professional behaviors throughout the experience. The experience is paired with a didactic course and students complete a variety of assignments to demonstrate their ability to apply classroom material to a clinical setting. Students have identified the practicum increased their confidence and helped make classroom learning come alive. Clinical educators stated this experience has made them better practitioners, and fieldwork educators state the students come to the fieldwork experience better prepared clinically and professionally. Based on this experience it appears early clinical exposure increases student preparedness and success in their Level II fieldwork experience.