

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

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Objectives

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.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Clinical Practicum is to provide enhanced classroom learning through clinical experiences within the Occupational Therapy Department at Rush University Medical Center.

Practicum Overview

- Occurs 1st three semesters
- 4 weeks – 3 hours/week
- Assigned a faculty liaison
- Focus:
 - Semester 1: Introduction
 - Semester 2: Skill Building
 - Semester 3: Application of Knowledge
- Associated with course in curriculum
- Practicum assignments address course content and clinical/professional development
- Sample assignments:
 - Occupational profile
 - IRM observation
 - Activity analysis

Student Perceptions

Benefits

- Gradual integration into more challenging clinical situations
- Increased confidence in working/interacting with clients
- Increased confidence in fieldwork
- Opportunity to see application of what we learn in class

Limitations

- Too short!
- Varying expectations between clinical instructors
- Difficult to get to know clinician in just 3 hours a week
- Limited knowledge in first quarter prevented me from asking quality, in-depth questions

Clinician Perceptions

Benefits

- Giving back to the profession
- Thinking more deeply about what I am doing and how to describe it
- Reinforcement of my own knowledge and skills
- Building confidence in students

Limitations

- Productivity
- Working with students pushes me to think more deeply about what I am doing and how to describe it to others. This can be demanding and create anxiety that I am not delivering what I want to deliver

Conclusions

- Practicum experiences offer additional learning opportunities
 - Outside of didactic coursework
 - Direct application of learning
- Impact student satisfaction
- Impact clinician satisfaction

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