

Title: Enhancing Cultural-Spiritual Diversity Awareness in Future health Care Professionals

Learning Objectives: Participants will be introduced to: (1) the importance of cultural-spiritual competency/sensitivity/humility in person-centred care, (2) ways to enhance cultural-spiritual sensitivity in future health care professionals (occupational therapists). **Background/Context:** Training for healthcare professionals in the areas of cultural-spiritual diversity awareness has taken on increased urgency because of the multicultural diversity of Canada's population. Canada welcomes over 250,000 new immigrants a year, many with different cultural-spiritual perspectives of health and different health issues than the Canadian norm. Health care professionals are thus faced with the challenge of caring for clients from many cultures and spiritual backgrounds, with different languages, and different understanding of illness and health. Our previous research among practicing health professionals has shown that while many were aware of the diversity of populations, their training had not included cultural-spiritual sensitive education. Occupational Therapy students are among those who would benefit from cultural-spiritual diversity training. **Design, Implementation, Evaluation:** The purpose of the study was to evaluate how effective a newly introduced educational session was on enhancing cultural-spiritual diversity awareness in future health care professionals - Master of Science, Occupational Therapy (MScOT) students. A thirteen hour educational session/module introduced MScOT students to the process and stages of becoming culturally-spiritually aware, techniques used to improve communication with clients during cross-cultural/spiritual encounters, cultural/spiritual competency as a problem-solving process, and engaged students in active discussions of cross-cultural/spiritual cases. The study captured self-reported cultural knowledge, awareness, and behaviours of a group of first-year occupational therapy students attending a thirteen-hour module during which they received formal cultural-spiritual diversity awareness education. **Results/Outcome:** The study findings have informed educators about the impact that cultural-spiritual training may have on enhancing cultural-spiritual diversity awareness of future practicing occupational therapists. Acquiring skills in cultural-spiritual diversity awareness and cross-cultural communication are important in facilitating the therapist-patient relationship and the patient-centered approach to health care, as well as addressing occupational therapy competencies. This study also informed training for other healthcare professionals.

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