

Threading Professionalism Through Occupational Therapy Curriculum: A Framework and Resources

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Abstract : Professionalism is an essential skill for clinicians, particularly for Occupational Therapy Providers (OTPs). The World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) Guiding Principles for Ethical Occupational Therapy and American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Code of Ethics establishes expectations for professionalism among OTPs, emphasizing its importance in the field. However, the teaching and assessment of professionalism vary across OTP programs. The flexibility provided by the country standards allows programs to determine their own approaches to meeting these standards, resulting in inconsistency. Educators in both academic and fieldwork settings face challenges in objectively assessing and providing feedback on student professionalism. Although they observe instances of unprofessional behavior, there is no standardized assessment measure to evaluate professionalism in OTP students. While most students are committed to learning and applying professionalism skills, they enter OTP programs with varying levels of proficiency in this area. Consequently, they lack a uniform understanding of professionalism and lack an objective means to self-assess their current skills and identify areas for growth. It is crucial to explicitly teach professionalism, have students to self-assess their professionalism skills, and have OTP educators assess student professionalism. This approach is necessary for fostering students' professionalism journeys. Traditionally, there has been no objective way for students to self-assess their professionalism or for educators to provide objective assessments and feedback. To establish a uniform approach to professionalism, the authors incorporated professionalism content into our curriculum. Utilizing an operational definition of professionalism, the authors integrated professionalism into didactic, fieldwork, and capstone courses. The complexity of the content and the professionalism skills expected of students increase each year to ensure students graduate with the skills to practice in accordance with the WFOT Guiding Principles for Ethical Occupational Therapy Practice and AOTA Code of Ethics. Two professionalism assessments were developed based on the expectations outlined in the both documents. The Professionalism Self-Assessment allows students to evaluate their professionalism, reflect on their performance, and set goals. The Professionalism Assessment for Educators is a modified version of the same tool designed for educators. The purpose of this workshop is to provide educators with a framework and tools for assessing student professionalism. The authors discuss how to integrate professionalism content into OTP curriculum and utilize professionalism assessments to provide constructive feedback and equitable learning opportunities for OTP students in academic, fieldwork, and capstone settings. By adopting these strategies, educators can enhance the development of professionalism among OTP students, ensuring they are well-prepared to meet the demands of the profession.

Keywords : professionalism, assessments, student learning, student preparedness, ethical practice

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