Applying the Model of Human Occupation in the Development of Consistent Ethical Behavior

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Introduction

Educational programs that prepare health care clinicians are expressing ever increasing concerns about their struggle in preparing future graduates for ethical, professional practice. Graduates that understand ethics are crucial to future quality care, but “understanding” is only the first step in the process. Ethics need to be valued if they are to be consistently practiced and students need to learn to regularly self-evaluate their progress in becoming ethical practitioners.

To begin this process it is imperative that health care educators explore new ways to assist students in seeing the value and purpose behind ethical training. Then, ethical thinking and practice opportunities need to be imbedded in all program classes and, ultimately, woven throughout the curriculums. By incorporating opportunities for repeated “habitual” practice of ethical behaviors, through this consistent laboratory practice, the programs have a better chance of graduating students who are competent, ethical clinicians, with the ability to consistently maintain successful ethical practice. This poster discusses the use of occupational therapy’s Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) as a framework for helping students understand the need to develop consistent habits of ethical performance.

Open Systems Theory

Occupational therapy conceptualizes the human being as an open system that constantly grows and changes through interaction with the surrounding context. Contexts is a broad term that includes more that just the physical environment, but also the social, economic, political, etc.

3 Subsystems

Volition

- Governs overall operation of the human system
- Responsible for choosing and initiating occupational behavior
- Incorporates the motivation for occupation

Habitation

- Organizes occupational behavior into patterns and routines

Performance Capacity

- Responsible for producing the occupational behavior

MOHO

First published in 1980, the Model of Human Occupation offers a broad and integrative view of human occupation. It seeks to explain how human occupation is motivated, patterned and performed. According to MOHO, humans are conceptualized as being made up of three interrelated subsystems: volition, habitation, and performance capacity.

Application

The Occupational Therapy Program at Allen College, in an effort to proactively address fieldwork professional behavior issues, has put into place a process that requires the students to regularly self-assess professional behavior, including ethical performance. Students discuss their progress towards goals with the assigned advisor and share examples of progress made. Imbedded clinical experiences in the coursework serve to provide new and greater challenges and the students are able to build the habit of regular, self-evaluation (each semester) as they incorporate progressively developing skills in all areas, including ethical professional behavior. The use of this OT model, emphasizing habitual skill practice, supports the student in building ethical behavior skills for successful future practice. Below is a copy of the format currently in use.