### 2015 Independent Studies

#### Dr. LaVonne Fox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gemma Saxon</th>
<th>The Impact of Multicultural Education Course on Therapist Cultural Competence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

"The need for culturally skilled occupational therapists (OTs) has been documented for years" (Wittman & Velde, 2002). In 2009, Cherry, Kitchens, Nicholson, Soden, Tomkiewicz, Kedia & Shah found that 32.8% of their respondents did not know about the demand for culturally competent occupational therapy (OT) services and cultural factors that could influence a client's occupational performance. Of this group 55-85% rated themselves as having limited awareness.

The purpose of this proposed study was to assess the effectiveness of the University of North Dakota (UND) OT multicultural course in preparing graduates toward cultural competence. The assessment was then compared to the literature to identify gaps in the course’s preparation of OT graduates. A retrospective, causal non-experimental survey design was used to gather data to answer the research question. A multi-dimensional survey was created and distributed. An online survey allowed the researcher to reach a wide range of potential participants that met the inclusion criteria. The survey allowed the researcher to identify key strengths and weaknesses within the OT 451 course and learn about the general attitudes of the participants who took the course. The University of North Dakota Occupational Therapy Alumni from graduating classes 2009-2013 were surveyed to evaluate the effectiveness of the OT 451 course in preparing students to become culturally competent practitioners.

The results of this study have a significant benefit for the UND OT department to be able to identify activities and teaching strategies that enable cultural competency growth and generalization. This will strengthen the students learning. It is believed that the UND OT students will enter the workforce able to more implement culturally sensitive interventions. It will contribute to the literature on the effective and ineffective strategies and activities for a more systematic teaching of cultural competence.

There are also limited consistent research outcomes related to developing or measuring cultural competence knowledge for occupational therapy students and clinicians. It is anticipated that the results of this study will add to the emergent body of literature intended to identify and improve the educational preparation of occupational therapy students toward becoming more culturally competent.

#### Dr. Julie Grabanski

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Katherine Spitzmueller &amp; Amy Feller</th>
<th>Transitioning to Retirement: Useful Topics for a Wellness Program with Retired Older Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Retirement has evolved from traditional stereotypes to an individualized plan. Transitioning into retirement can be a stressful time and it is generally accepted that pre-retirement attitudes impact post-retirement success (Marshall, Clarke & Ballantyne, 2001). A wellness program can make the transition into retirement less difficult by incorporating different dimensions of wellness: social, intellectual, occupational, physical, emotional, and spiritual (Strout & Howard, 2012). Currently there is very little research indicating the effectiveness of a wellness program that addresses these dimensions. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to gain insight into useful topics for a wellness program based on perspectives of currently retired adults to assist those who will retire in the future.

A phenomenological research design was used to develop semi-structured interviews with four male retirees from the Midwest regions of Grand Forks, ND and Minneapolis, MN. Interviews were conducted to gather rich detail about the participants’ retirement experiences. Data analysis was based on methods developed by Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) to draw out common experiences among the participants.
Themes that were important during the transition to retirement included retirement planning, supportive relationships, and maintenance of a healthy lifestyle. Finances and possible decline in health were the major concerns for retirees. A primary limitation of this study was due to the small, Midwest-based, male sample size.

**Dr. Debra Hanson**

**Roberta Reid & Allen Simpson**

**Occupational Therapists in Primary Care: Perceptions of Incorporating New Interventions into Practice**

Due to an increased focus on prevention in current United States health care policy, an increasing number of occupational therapists have been integrating into primary care teams. There is little to no research available demonstrating the perceptions of practicing occupational therapists regarding primary care; specifically what barriers and opportunities are hindering and helping, and if current practitioners are considering transitioning to primary care. The purpose of this independent study was to conduct a focus group with practicing therapists to explore OT perceptions regarding the potential role they might play in primary care and how/if they might begin this process in their respective facilities. Participants were recruited at the Occupational Therapy Association of Colorado’s annual conference in October 2014 after attendance at a breakout session on the topic of primary care. Eight volunteers participated in a 45 minute semi-structured focus group. Data analysis consisted of initial coding and grouping of codes into categories. From the categories, themes emerged; each theme was supported by a minimum of three quotations from participants. Results of the data analysis revealed four major themes including: (1) anticipating change; (2) therapist confidence; (3) advocacy for occupational therapy as a profession; and (4) reimbursement of primary care services. These themes demonstrate the need for further education and resources on this topic with specific, concrete examples and practical guides of how occupational therapy might work in primary care and how practitioners can be reimbursed for their services.

**Dr. Cindy Janssen**

**Danielle Nelson-Deering & Haley Pratt**

**Occupational Therapy Practitioner's Views on Health Promotion and Wellness Programming: A Qualitative Study.**

**Purpose:** Explore the essence of occupational therapy (OT) practitioners’ perceptions of their experiences with health and wellness programming; to further understand the lack of this type of programming by finding out what their needs are in order to provide it.

**Methods:** A qualitative, phenomenological study was used to gather data to answer the research questions. Following IRB approval, convenience/snowball sampling was used to access participants and gather data. Five registered occupational therapists participated in this study.

**Results:** OT practitioners have positive views for health and wellness promotion; however, in order to be successful to OT practitioner must have an internal drive to provide such programming

**Conclusion:** There are many benefits for promoting health and wellness at the community level; however, OT practitioners find there are more barriers than supports, and there must be an internal drive from the OT practitioner in order to be successful.

**Professor Breann Lamborn**

**Christopher Greenman & Lauren Harvey**

**Current Knowledge of Occupational Therapists in Wyoming Regarding the Affordable Care Act: A Quantitative Pilot Study**

There is little information and research addressing occupational therapists’ knowledge level and ability to implement the Affordable Care Act (ACA). This leads to the following problem statements: occupational therapists’ knowledge level of and ability to implement changes to practice is unknown; furthermore, it is unknown if there is a difference in knowledge level based on professional membership, years of practice,
and area of practice; and it is also unknown which aspects or areas of the ACA occupational therapists would like to know more about, and if there is a difference based upon professional membership, years of practice or area of practice.

The researchers created a quantitative, mail-based survey to gain insight to the problem statements. The researchers obtained approval from University of North Dakota’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to administer this survey to occupational therapists licensed in Wyoming, and mailed the survey. The researchers utilized SPSS® version 22 to test correlational statistics and data. Independent samples t-tests and ANOVA were utilized to test significance and analyze possible correlations.

The survey was sent to 281 Wyoming occupational therapists, with a total of 139 (49.47%) occupational therapists returning the survey. More of the occupational therapists (63 of 139 or 45.32%) rated their general knowledge of the ACA as a two on a scale of one to five than in any other area. When asked about specific areas of the ACA × and its relationship to occupational therapy most occupational therapists (37%-46% or 52-64 of 139) rated themselves as having no knowledge or as a one out of five on each area. Additionally, most occupational therapists (approximately 49% or 67 of 139) rated their research habits at a one, indicating that they do not research current changes in legislation regarding the ACA. Furthermore, with the correlational statistics completed, relationships between variables were detected. Relationships were found with knowledge level of the ACA and occupational therapists working in orthopedics and geriatrics. Furthermore, pediatric practitioners reported a lower need for knowledge about the ACA than those in any other area (p<.001); however, occupational therapists practicing in SNFs (33 of 130) reported a greater need for knowledge than those in other areas (p=0.0465).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dr. Sarah Nielsen</th>
<th>Meg O’Brien &amp; Emily Terhaar</th>
<th>The Experience of Occupational Therapists’ Approaches and Interventions for School-aged Children and Adolescents with Anxiety.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In the realm of occupational therapy there is not a clear or cohesive evidence based approach that OT’s use to guide intervention planning with school-aged children or adolescent who have anxiety or anxiety secondary to another medical condition. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the experience of 6 pediatric occupational therapists in an outpatient setting in developing and implementing interventions for this population. Researchers utilized a phenomenological qualitative research method completing six interviews to understand the experience of the participants. Findings suggest that occupational therapists who participated in this study feel that they have skills and abilities to provide interventions to this population. Participants rely on an individualized eclectic therapeutic approach, but feel a standardized approach would assist in treating school-aged children and adolescents with anxiety, or anxiety secondary to another medical condition. Further research including observation and larger sample sizes should be done to more fully understand current practice and eventually facilitate the development of a standardized intervention protocol for this population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vanessa Dvergsten &amp; Alissa Haugen</th>
<th>Experiential Learning and its Impact on Critical Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Background:** In occupational therapy education, it is unclear what educational methods best facilitate the development of critical thinking. Therefore, this pilot study explored whether Level I fieldwork coupled with reflective learning opportunities impacts the development of critical thinking skills.
Methods: The researchers employed a pre and post-test design which measured both self-perception of critical thinking and actual performance of critical thinking. Specifically, the Health Science Reasoning Test (HSRT) and a reflective writing assignment graded with a rubric were utilized to measure actual performance. The Self-Assessment of Critical Reflection and Reasoning (SACRR) was used to measure self-perceived performance of critical thinking.

Results: In this study, participants demonstrated improvements in critical thinking following a Level I fieldwork. Specific improvements were found in the areas of evaluation and induction skills, which are subscales of the HRST. There was also an increase in participants’ self-perceived confidence in utilizing critical thinking skills. The use of reflective writing assignment was found to increase the participants ability to use evaluation, inference, and deduction skills.

Conclusion: Experiential learning experiences coupled with a reflective writing assignment is an effective means of developing critical thinking skills. Future research should utilize a bigger sample size to confirm the findings and increase the generalizability of the results.