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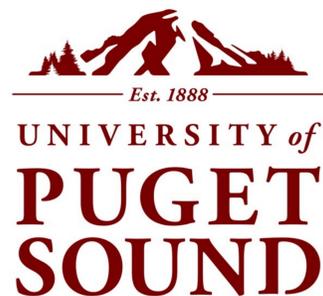
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Investigating Professional Development: Comparing Students Self-Assessment with Assessment of the Clinical Instructors

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INTRODUCTION

In a career where professionals are making medical decisions, an unbiased self-awareness is necessary for professional development.^{1,2} This study compares student self assessment of professionalism with Clinical Instructor (CI) assessment at the same developmental time. Guiding research questions included: Do students have good insight into their own development? Are there character traits that predict how Student Physical Therapists (SPTs) will perform clinically?³

METHOD

The class of 2020 Clinical Performance Instrument (CPI) questions addressing professionalism were evaluated for the first and second internships. Numerical scores from the CI and student were recorded and key words were identified in the SPTs and CIs comments. The cohort has 36 students.

Specific data included the CIs response for question number 2, which reads “demonstrates professional behavior in all situations”. Focusing on sub-question L “seeks feedback from clinical instructors related to clinical performance”. Additionally, data included the student’s responses for question number 6, which reads “participates in self-assessment to improve clinical and professional performance “. Sub-question C reads “uses self-evaluation, ongoing feedback from others, inquiry, and reflection to conduct regular ongoing self-assessment to improve clinical practice and professional development”. Sub-question G reads “discusses progress of clinical and professional growth”. Qualitative analysis was conducted on the words “professional behavior”, “seeks feedback”, “self-assessment”, “professional development” and “discusses progress”. Synonyms of these words were also considered for a score if stated by the student.

RESULTS

The CPI results consistently showed students rating themselves lower than the CI on the objective measures of professional behavior and professional development. The difference was statistically significant for the first internship only. There was no difference between the frequency of word usage for attributes of professionalism. In general, CIs rated students highly in professional behaviors if they sought feedback.

DISCUSSION

Do SPTs unreasonably grade themselves low on self-assessments because they experience imposter syndrome? Does this cause them to discount their success due to shortcomings between their exemplary standards and how they perform?

Professionalism is defined in the CPI as “the conduct, aims, or qualities that characterize or mark a profession or a professional person; A systematic and integrated set of core values that through assessment, critical reflection, and change, guides the judgement, decision, behavior, and attitude of the Physical Therapist, in relation to patients, clients, other professionals, the public, and the profession”.⁴ This definition demonstrates that professionalism cannot be attained without reflection and that it is not something that only affects the professional in question, but the community around them including their patients and colleagues. Opportunities for self-reflection throughout a Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) curriculum may have its benefits in developing DPTs with high qualities of professional behavior and self-reflection to promote continued self-learning and development in the medical community.

CONCLUSION

Students consistently rated themselves lower than CIs on the objective measures of professional behavior and professional development. The true cause of this requires further investigation.

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