**Objective:** The purpose of this study was to gather preliminary data regarding occupational therapy students’ perceptions of the interdisciplinary aspect of simulation after participating in a simulation experience.

The use of simulation has become an integral part in the training of health care professionals in recent years. It is widely used in various levels of training for physicians, dentists, and nurses, and, more recently, has been considered as a tool in occupational therapy education. Simulated clinical experiences have shown to be of value in helping students to develop and master clinical skills and gain knowledge in a safe and controlled environment. Additionally, simulation provides opportunities for students to begin working together in an interdisciplinary setting, which can help foster relationships between practitioners who will be working together in real-world clinical situations. Significant evidence suggesting positive impacts and positive learner perceptions of simulations within other healthcare fields has led to the incorporation of interdisciplinary simulation training into the occupational therapy curriculum at San José State University beginning in the Fall of 2013. This approach combines two recent trends and innovative strategies in occupational therapy education: the use of simulation and interdisciplinary education. Given its novelty, research on the use of simulation in occupational therapy education is lacking, as is information regarding the interdisciplinary aspect of simulation in occupational therapy. The data collected will add to a lacking body of knowledge in this area as well as aid in future curricular development regarding the use of simulation in the occupational therapy program at SJSU.

**Design:** Forty-one occupational therapy students participated in an interdisciplinary simulation experience with nursing and dietitian students. Two surveys were used to gather the students’ perceptions and attitudes. The Readiness for Interprofessional learning Scale (RIPLS) was used to gather attitudes towards interprofessional learning prior to the simulation experience. A post-test questionnaire was used following the simulation to examine participants’ perceptions of the simulation experience itself.

**Results:** The results of the RIPLS indicated that the majority of students had positive attitudes towards interprofessional learning. Students reported benefits in the areas of teamwork and collaboration, professional identity and roles and responsibilities. The post-test questionnaire indicated strong positive perceptions of the simulation experience. Students reported that interdisciplinary learning through simulation is a valuable within the educational setting and for future practice. A large majority of the students reported that they enjoyed the experience, found it useful and would like it added to the curriculum.

**Conclusion:** This study provided preliminary data addressing current gaps in research on interdisciplinary learning through simulation in occupational therapy. The positive results of this study indicate that interdisciplinary simulation in education can be an effective and integral tool and would be well received by SJSU occupational therapy students. It is an enjoyable and meaningful method of education to learn realistic and fundamental skills needed in health care, such as role understanding and identification, communication, teamwork and collaboration. Implications for implementing this into occupational therapy curriculum are such that students would potentially enter the work force with improved interdisciplinary skills resulting in better and more effective patient care.

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References


