Utilizing Modern Technology to Perform Clinical Education Visits in a Physical Therapy Program

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Method/Description

- Three DPT students began their final clinical experience (out of 3) in the Spring 2015.
- The Director of Clinical Education (DCE) performed their mid-term ‘visit’ utilizing Skype.
  ~Discussions with both the student and the clinical instructor
  ~‘Virtual’ tour of the facility
- DCE compiled data related to cost of the new process and if traditional visits had occurred
  ~Equipment and mailing cost
  ~Estimated costs, if DCE had visited these sites
- At the completion of the Clinical Experience (April 2015), DCE surveyed the students (2) and CI(1) that provided informed consent to participate
  ~To gather their feedback on the Skype visit as compared to a phone call and in-person visit
- DCE compiled results of perceptions from students, CIs, and DCE regarding this new process for ‘virtual visits’.
  ~Cost savings
  ~Pros and Cons based on stakeholders’ feedback

Unique & Innovative

- Performing ‘virtual visits’ during clinical experiences is not standard practice.
- It could help offset the financial constraints that are limiting schools from performing site visits for DPT students while on their clinical experiences.

Purpose

- How do we oversee 62 students on clinical experiences while seeing growing financial limitations to perform site visits?
- This case report was written to help determine the benefits and struggles related to performing a Skype ‘visit’ with students and clinical instructors during a clinical experience.

Results/Outcomes

Cost Summary

- Estimated cost to visit a student that was placed outside of Maine: $700-$975/student.
- Estimated cost for Skype visit for the 1st time: $350/student.
- Estimated cost for Skype visit after initial visit: $50/student.

*Cost differences for 1st time and later Skype visits was due to the cost to purchase equipment. Cost after that is based on mailing expenses.

Benefits

- Cost effective
- Provides face to face interactions
- Able to visually tour a clinic that is too far for travel
- Time and scheduling efficiency
- Assists with DCEs knowledge of a clinical site, thus improving their ability to effective advise students

Challenges

- Mailing iPad to site (delivery issues)
- Access to Wi-Fi limited at some sites
- Finding a private place to perform Skype visit

Funding Source

The Physical Therapy Department at the University of New England in Portland, Maine funded this case study.

C = Clinical Instructor
S1 = Student 1
S2 = Student 2
D = DCE

Additional Comment: “I still believe an in-person visit is better than a Skype visit, but understand that when students are far away from campus, an in-person visit is not possible. With this in mind, a Skype visit is the best option than a phone call” (student 1)