Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy students participating in placements where their supervisor works in a dual role

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AIMS

To investigate the possibility of speech pathology (SP) and occupational therapy (OT) students, participating in placements where their supervisor works as a case manager and as a SP or OT.

METHODOLOGY

Purposeful sampling was used to recruit 16 participants from two groups. Group 1 (n=11): Staff who are employed as both case managers and SPs or OTs or solely as paediatric case managers in regional brain injury rehabilitation programs (BIRPs). Group 2 (n=5): Staff who are employed by universities that provide SP and OT degrees in NSW and have an investment in clinical placements.

A combination of semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted. All data was transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis.

RESULTS

6 themes emerged from the analysis. These included the supervisor’s experience of a non-traditional model, which described the opportunities and barriers that may arise when students are placed with a supervisor who works in a dual role. Communication, specific perceptions of a clinical placement and utilisation of a variety of supervisory models were essential for success. The specific student cohort and the assessment processes were factors that did not affect the success of such a placement.

CONCLUSIONS

Numerous regional BIRPs employ staff in dual roles. Anecdotally, this has influenced their ability to offer student placements. The results from this study demonstrate that there is scope for students to participate in these placements.

While there are complexities of students participating in this model of service delivery, there are also many benefits for students, supervisors and universities. For the benefits to outweigh the complexities there are necessities that need to be fulfilled by students, universities and supervisors. The results also reveal other plausible barriers that in fact do not affect students participating in both case management and discipline specific work.
This highlights the opportunity to enhance clinical placements and grow rock pools by incorporating students into this model of service delivery, which is commonly used in regional BIRPs.