Using iPads to Support OT Student Supervision

Project background

The increased demand for the Department of Health to provide non-inpatient services via community based ambulatory care programs increases the need for the future health workforce to be exposed to non-acute treatment settings during their clinical training. Despite this need, there is a recognised shortage of occupational therapy clinical placements across Australia and internationally (Friedland, Polatajko & Gage, 2001). Here in Victoria, the clinical placement capacity of non-acute health settings is said to be vastly underutilised (Department of Health, 2012). In response to these workforce issues, this research project aims to explore alternate methods of facilitating fieldwork supervision, specifically the use of iPads, for use in supporting final year occupational therapy clinical placement students.

Project aims

- To determine whether iPads are a feasible way to support student supervision of final year OT students
- To identify the benefits and barriers to using iPads for student supervision
- To determine whether students are able to increase their progression towards independent practice through the use of iPad technology
- To determine whether supervisors are able to use their time more effectively

Methodology

1. Supervisors will seek verbal consent from patients for OT students to participate in the provision of OT services and document this in the patient’s clinical record as per usual practice.
2. Students will provide OT services in conjunction with their clinical supervisor, and participate in the standard assessment process using the SPEF-R assessment tool.
3. Once the student is assessed at the level ‘adequate’ or higher in the practice domains of: professional behaviour, self management, communication and information gathering skills, the student and supervisor will be invited to participate in the research project and complete a consent process.
4. Students and supervisors who have agreed to participate in the research project will be asked to complete a short (20 minute) demographic survey.
5. Students and supervisors will be trained in using the selected video conferencing software on the iPad and asked to incorporate it as part of their learning/supervision process during some assessment /intervention sessions (hospital based and home or community based assessment and intervention).
6. Students and supervisors will be asked to complete a brief (5 min) written evaluation of iPad use following each session.
7. Students and supervisors will be invited to participate in separate focus groups.

How will the iPads be used?

- The iPad can be used to permit remote supervision during a range of OT practices, including initial assessments, assessment or treatment in the treatment areas such as the OT kitchen, cognitive room or upper limb areas as well as home and community sessions
- Students will set up the iPad in order to catch the best view of the treatment area; this can be streamed back to the supervisor using a video conferencing tool
- The supervisor will also have access to an iPad which can be set up in their work area
- The supervisor can “check in” on the student during the session and/or guide the student as required
• Use of the iPad will enable the students to develop some autonomy whilst also having the support of their supervisor

**How to access the iPad**

There will be six iPads and two iPad minis available and they will be stored in the OT department. The iPads will need to be signed in and out similar to using a mobile phone and will be stored in a lockable drawer in OT office 4. Three of the iPads will be 3G enabled and therefore able to be used on home and community visits. These iPads will be clearly labelled.

All iPads will be linked to the Alfred Health wireless network and therefore can be used throughout the hospital. The wireless connectivity is automatically set up on each iPad.

**Timeframe and anticipated number of students**

The project will run from March, 2013 until December 2013. It is hoped during that time more than 15 final year OT students will have participated in the project.

**Ethics**

Ethics applications were submitted and approved by the Alfred and La Trobe ethics committees. The ethics applications can be found in the iPad folder should you require further information. All project data will be stored according to the processes described in the ethics application.

**Guidelines**

The iPad project folder contains ‘policies and procedures’ for iPad use including details regarding use, storage, and security and infection control. Each iPad will have an electronic form of the Apple iPad user guide located in the ‘Admin’ folder. This folder also contains information about relevant applications.

**Contact**

**Project Manager/Principal Investigator**  
Karen Roberts  
Grade 4 Occupational Therapist  
K.Roberts@cgmc.org.au  
p. 03 9076 6287

**Principal Investigator**  
A/Prof Natasha Lannin  
A/Prof Occupational Therapy  
n.lannin@latrobe.edu.au  
p. 0417135153

**Project Officer**  
Elizabeth O’Shannessy  
Occupational Therapist  
E.O’Shannessy@cgmc.org.au  
p. 03 9076 6287

**References**


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