OP/SIT conference: 2017

Presenters/Facilitators
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1 Title
The value of oral assessment (viva) to determine student clinical reasoning competency and coursework integration.

2 The research
Occupational therapy students undertake oral assessments (Viva) throughout their three-year undergraduate course at Otago Polytechnic. It is used as a means of students demonstrating the competencies involved in clinical reasoning, which in the Occupational Therapy Department follows a model called the occupational therapy problem-solving process. The assessment requires students to integrate their classroom learning within client-based scenarios that demands both an assessment and an intervention plan.

Lecturer feedback and student assessment data shows that a significant proportion of students struggle with the experience in a way that is not apparent with written work, despite preparatory exercises being provided to support successful completion. Focus group research was been conducted with students and individual interviews with teaching staff. We will draw on this data to describe the tensions faced by students and lecturers.

3. Results
Student feedback suggests that regardless of the anxiety created by this form of assessment, they appreciate its value because it gives them greater confidence in justifying practice and conveying information to clinical colleagues. The findings identify aspects of this assessment method that students find both challenging and satisfying, they also demonstrate how the merger of occupational therapy qualities &/or skills with practice is made.

4. Conclusion
An oral assessment is a valid method of preparing students for practice. Introducing students to a way of thinking in preparation for their fieldwork placements is challenging with careful attention needed to scaffold student learning throughout the programme.