

Educational Interventions for Managing Ethical Problems in OT: A Survey of Practitioners' Experiences

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PURPOSE: To explore the impact of ethics education on managing ethical problems among OT practitioners (OTP) within the first five years of practice.

DESIGN: This study used a pre-existing survey dataset that was collected in the Spring of 2020. Survey questions included ethics education participants had received, how much they believed each type of education helped them manage ethical problems, and how confident they felt responding to ethical issues in practice.

METHOD: Investigators completed frequencies, percents and counts to examine and compare ethics education types and formats, perceived helpfulness of each for managing ethical problems, and ethical problem solving confidence.

RESULTS: OTs and OTAs (n=125) from the USA and territories responded to the survey. OTP reported the most helpful ethics education types were classroom discussions and case studies; fieldwork mentorship, informal discussions, and experience; continuing education; and informal discussions with colleagues. Practitioners relied on personal experience, common knowledge, past education, supervisors, mentors, and colleagues within their organizations to manage ethical problems. They were highly confident in their ability to manage ethical problems, access the AOTA Code of Ethics, State Practice Act, and find setting policies pertaining to ethics. They were not confident in finding written resources or filing an ethics complaint.

CONCLUSION: Preparedness will assist OTP to manage ethical problems and mitigate moral distress. Reflecting on which types of ethics education are most helpful will help OTP articulate the need for continuing ethics education to manage ethical problems. Implications for practice include more support for ethical problem management during fieldwork, ethics mentorships, continuing education, and ethics rounds in practice.

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