

Impact of Simulation-Based Level I Fieldwork on Level II Fieldwork Performance

Rebecca Ozelie, DHS, OTR/L, Maggie Moeller, Taylor Newmark

Rush University, Chicago, Illinois, United States

DOI: [10.5014/ajot.2023.77S2-PO330](https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2023.77S2-PO330)

Date presented: April 21, 2023

Primary Author and Speaker: Rebecca Ozelie, rebecca_ozelie@rush.edu

PURPOSE: Fieldwork (FW) is an essential component of occupational therapy (OT) curriculums. Level I FW can be delivered through simulated environments, standardized patients, faculty practice, faculty-led site visits, or supervision by a FW educator in a practice environment. Despite this variety, the US has reported a growing shortage of FW availability (Mattila et al., 2020; Schafer-Clay, 2019) which was exacerbated by COVID-19. In response, educators implemented non-traditional FW experiences including simulation. While research is emerging on the use of simulation-based FW, there is no known evidence about the impact of simulation-based level I FW on level II FW performance. The objective was to analyze the impact of a simulation-based level I FW experience on OT students' performance on level II FW.

DESIGN: This study was a retrospective analysis of a purposive sample of 37 OTD students from a private, midwestern university that completed a traditional or simulation-based level I FW. All subjects also completed two, 12 week level II FWs.

METHODS: Analysis of student performance on the AOTA FW Performance Evaluation (FWPE) was performed using independent t-tests to compare differences in level II FW performance between students that completed the traditional and simulation-based Level I FW.

RESULTS: Results found no statistically significant difference in level II FW performance between the two groups ($p = .683$).

CONCLUSION: The use of simulation-based level I FW is comparable to in-person FW and may be a practical solution to the national shortage of FW availability and the lingering impacts of COVID-19 on FW.

IMPACT STATEMENT: The findings from this study align with current perspectives in healthcare regarding the effectiveness of simulations as a teaching methodology. This timely study adds to the growing body of knowledge regarding the effectiveness of simulation in OT curricula and proposes an alternative to the national FW shortage crisis.

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