
San Marcos, Summer 2018

Research Day, San Marcos Campus

4-2018

Thinking and Acting "Outside the Box"

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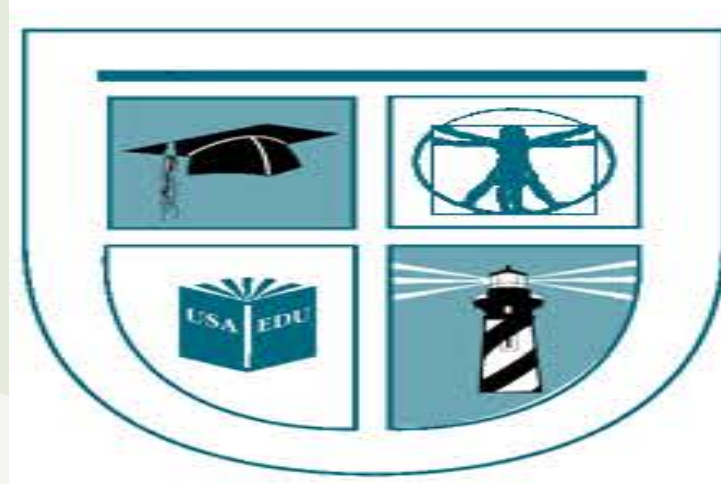
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Recommended Citation

Schwier, Erin E.; DiGrado, Jennie; and Childers, Christine Mary, "Thinking and Acting "Outside the Box"" (2018). *San Marcos, Summer 2018*. 2.

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Introduction

Role play and simulation are both powerful teaching tools that have been used in nursing and physician education for many years. Role playing offers a cheaper alternative than simulation and allows the individuals playing the roles to experience the patient's perspective. The University of St. Augustine in California is one of the few PT programs to teach PT students the Allen Cognitive levels, and the importance of cognition when planning and developing interventions. With the aging of the baby boomers, more therapists will be working with the aging population, and it is critical that the concept of cognitive challenges is introduced, and practiced, within the professional educational setting. The university also strongly supports inter-professional education and its growing role in health education.

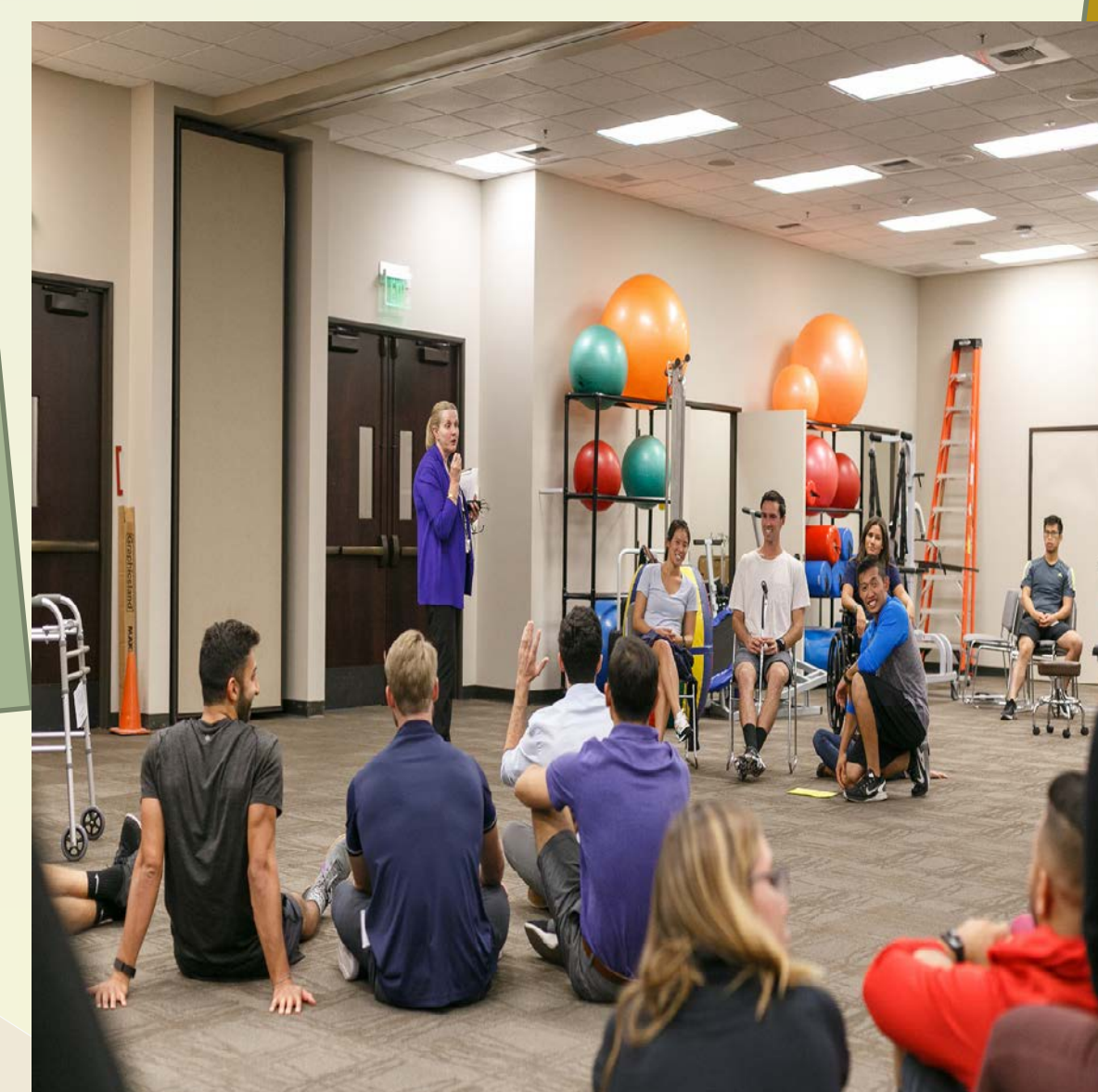
Method

In a combined health sciences class, the student OTs role play patient scenarios with varying clinical locations and cognitive levels, including outpatient and day surgery situations. Meanwhile the PT students try and establish the cognitive levels of the patient, and provide appropriately structured interventions. Pre and post surveys are completed by all participants, and the PTs were further surveyed after their first clinical rotation. There was also a combined debriefing session at the end of class

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Thinking and Acting "Outside the Box"

(OT Pre survey)
"We treat cognition, why should we share with the PTs?"



(PT During the scenarios)
"The patient cannot give consent – there is nothing we can do"

"It was interesting to see how the PTs interacted, it made me realize they need to know this"
(OT post survey)

"Although it seemed silly at the time, it was very accurate to what I subsequently experienced in the clinic"
(PT After the first full time clinical)

Conclusions

Both groups benefit significantly as demonstrated by pre- and post-surveys and discussions. The student PTs realize the need to be creative with their interventions and "think outside the box" while also realizing that cognitive issues are not just found in skilled nursing settings. Meanwhile the student OTs, who have been previously introduced to assessment and treatment of cognition, reinforce learning, and improve their understanding of the need to advocate for the role of OT. It also encourages referrals within the interdisciplinary team. The OTs also gain a greater empathy for their patients, and as the smaller proportion of students in the class, gain a level of empowerment over their peers. All reactions support the need to promote understanding of factors influencing human performance that is currently lacking in health education

Final thoughts

Working together in a safe classroom environment, can promote understanding and empathy between the OT and PT student, while helping them both understand the physical issues related to cognitive decline.



Application to clinical settings

Similar activities and concepts can be applied in a clinical setting to the interdisciplinary team, where the OTs and PTs can role play for other members of the team. This will provide all team members with a greater understanding of the complexities of cognitive issues, and the functional impairments associated with cognitive decline



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