Title: A Walk Through Dementia: An Occupational Therapy Students’ Experience

Project Abstract:

The purpose of this project is to evaluate the effectiveness of the “Walk through Dementia” simulation experience. Explicitly, what is the value of the simulation in building empathy in occupational therapy students specifically related to working with individuals with dementia? The investigators will create a pilot simulation lab in the Spring 2019 semester with a group of 10-12 occupational therapy students that have previously completed the OTD 423 Occupational Therapy with Older Adults course. These students have not previously participated in a dementia simulation experience. Following the simulation, the students will provide feedback on the effectiveness of the experience in a focus group. If the results affirm the simulation is an effective learning modality to build empathy towards individuals with dementia, the simulation lab will be retained and delivered within OTD 423 beginning in the fall of 2019 with all second year occupational therapy students.

The project is timely and relevant. “The total number of people with dementia worldwide is currently estimated at 47.5 million and this number is expected to increase to 135.5 million by 2050 (World Health Organization (WHO), 2016). The intention of incorporating a virtual reality simulation into OTD 423 will be to apply the knowledge about dementia and elevate said knowledge to a higher level of familiarity, albeit temporarily and minimally, of what the lived experience is like for an individual with dementia.

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