

Can a virtual observational placement for MSc (pre-registration) physiotherapy achieve learning outcomes?

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Introduction: Due to the impact of Covid-19 on national placement capacity, a contingency plan was necessary to ensure high quality Practice-Based Learning (PBL) opportunities for Oxford Brookes students. This was paramount to keep students on track with their programme of study, whilst also meeting the module learning outcomes; Non-discriminatory practice & Confidentiality, Professional/Personal Behaviours, Communication, Policies & Legislation, Health & Safety, Reflection, Evidence of Learning, Critical Incident Review and Personal Development.

Method: The virtual PBL experience was provided by Physiotherapy Practice Educators from Oxford Health NHS FT, Healthshare Oxfordshire, Great Western NHS FT, Warwick Physio & Rehab and the Bosworth Clinic. It was facilitated by Academic faculty staff from Oxford Brookes University. Eight pre-registration MSc physiotherapy students commenced on the virtual PBL experience in January 2021, increasing to 15 students over the 3 week period, due to the various impacts of Covid-19.

3 week virtual PBL experience, with 1 week in different speciality areas: Cardiorespiratory, Musculoskeletal and Neurology



Blended learning activities included live streamed in/outpatient patient assessment/treatment, pre-recorded assessment/treatment, community virtual follow-up and virtual rehabilitation classes



Sessions supported with Q&A, debriefing, clinical reasoning discussions, documentation skills and critical reflection



Student, Educator and Academic faculty quantitative and qualitative feedback was generated based on a SLOT framework pre- and post-placement



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Results:

“Learning how to conduct a consultation virtually / lead an exercise class and identify the factors to be considered / overcome”

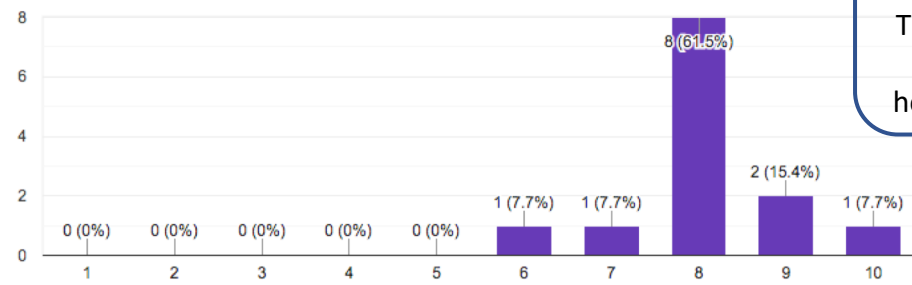
“I got to observe sessions with physios in real life practise which met my expectations. There was a lot more reflective practice after each activity which I wasn't expecting but thought was really beneficial and helped me to make the most of the next day”

“I feel like the main strength I have developed from this placement is both virtual communication and clinical reasoning for treatments”

“To understand and learn how virtual assessments and treatments are undertaken. This gives us insight as to how some aspects of future healthcare will be carried out”



How would you rate your virtual placement out of 10?



Conclusion: It is feasible to achieve the desired learning outcomes of a PBL experience through a virtual observational placement. Student evaluation was positive, showing themes of developing virtual and additional skills including clinical reasoning, communication, professionalism and documentation. Reflective practice was enhanced beyond the expected levels through facilitation led by the academic faculty staff. Future work will aim to explore further the preparedness for placements within the ever evolving physiotherapy landscape.