

How does Occupational Therapy students' confidence change over the course of a placement in stroke, what influences this and how to best manage student expectations?

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Background

Practice placements are essential for building skills, knowledge and confidence in Occupational Therapy (OT) students (Turpin et al, 2012). Confidence has been previously examined in OT practice placements (Holland, Middleton and Uys, 2012; Reazee et al, 2014), but no literature specific to stroke has been identified through a basic search. A new model of practice placement was trialled across the stroke integrated care system with the aim of enhancing student experience in OT in stroke. This opportunity enabled us to better understand changes in confidence across the placement and factors influencing this.

Understanding these factors helped us to guide our induction process to best prepare students (Ingwersen, Lyons and Hitch, 2016; Judd et al, 2023) for the highly pressured environment within stroke services, while also encompassing the complexities of impact of stroke on individuals.

References:

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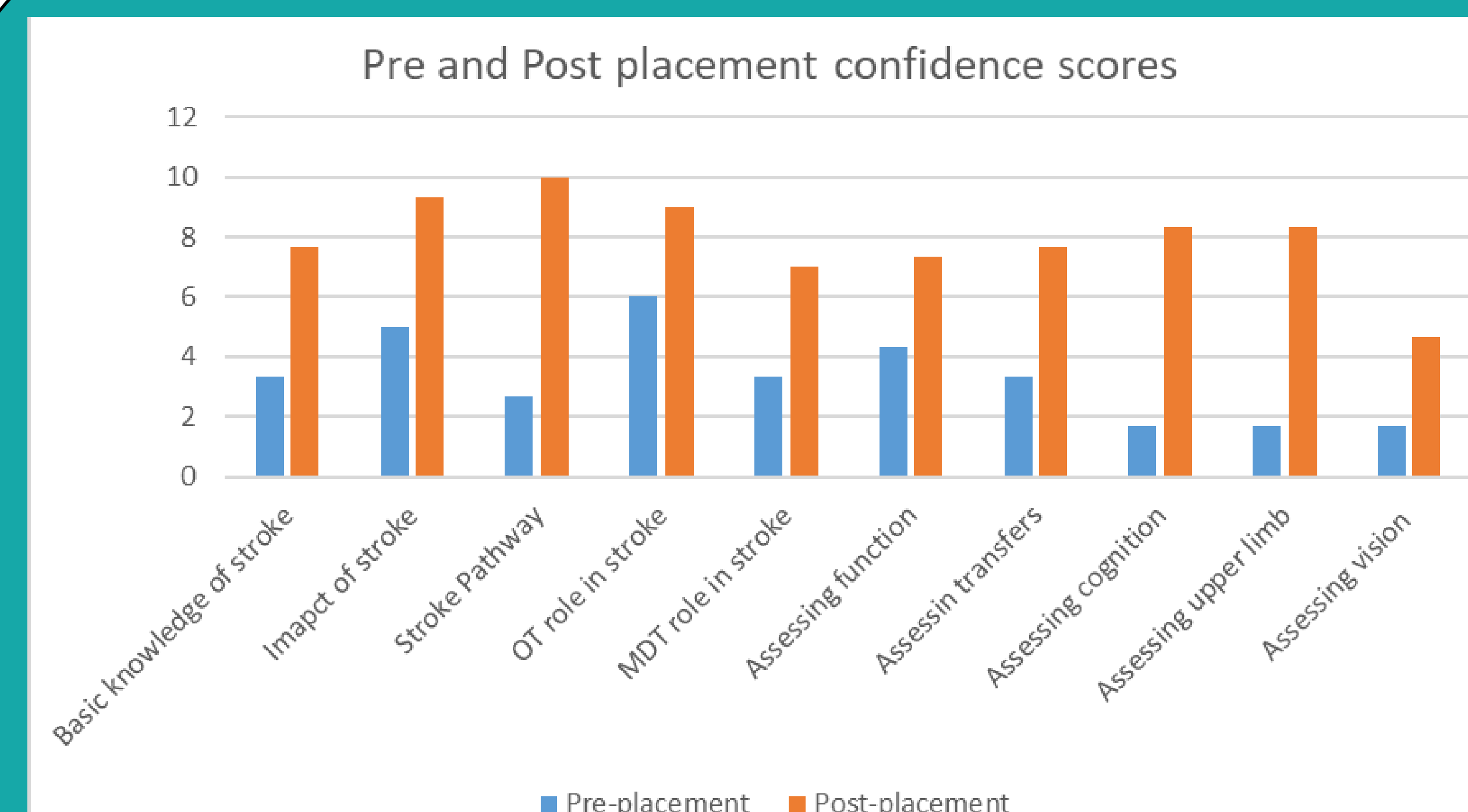
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Methods

Mixed method approach	- Survey at the beginning and end of 10 week placement in perceived confidence (1=not confident, 10=extremely confident) across various areas of knowledge and skills. Open ended questions were used to inform how confidence changed during placement and what influenced these changes. - Analysis of themes from answers to open ended questions
Data collected	Quantitative and qualitative data
Analysis method	Mean of pre and post placement scores for quantitative data. Themes derived from qualitative data.
Number of participants	N=3 (N=2 on a split placement model; N=1 on a single site placement)

Results



- No students had prior experience with stroke patients
- Pre-placement average scores showed unexpectedly high confidence levels (ranging from 1.66 to 6 out of 10)
- Overall average increased following placement from 32.96 to 79.3 (out of 100 %)
- Smallest increase in confidence was seen with assessing vision and function
- Highest increase seen in understanding the stroke pathway

Themes



Perception of pre-placement preparation

- Lack of stroke specific information as part of pre-placement information
- IT issues raised that could have been resolved before placement, such as SystemOne training



Students' perception of placement expectations

- Students wanted more autonomy in completing patient assessments
- Less confidence with stroke-specific assessments (vision and functional ADLs)



Transition across Stroke Pathway

- Split placement students had reduction in confidence when changing between acute/community settings at week 5 but improved understanding of pathway
- Single site student did not report this

Conclusions

Confidence in OT role in stroke has scored high in both pre and post placement however, these scores are not reflected in confidence in completing assessments in particular function and vision.

Analysis of themes suggests a conflict of expectations of the student and the educator for a first year OT placement. Stroke is a demanding area of OT and the expectations of educators were for students to improve their stroke knowledge and begin developing skills, whereas students felt they could have managed more responsibility leading assessments.

Impact

In order to increase confidence levels in those lowest scoring areas (e.g. visual and functional assessments), further data is needed to determine how this can be improved during placement. We would recommend identifying clear expectations for the student at the beginning of placement for what level they should be aiming for ensuring that this is a key part of supervision. Additionally pre-placement information on OT in stroke should form part of an induction.

Split placements appeared to contribute to improving student understanding of the stroke pathway however may limit students working more independently due to change in setting.

Further research with a bigger sample size would be beneficial to gain more insight into student experience and confidence during stroke placements.