Supporting International Students on Placement

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**Current Situation**

- Healthcare professionals around the world are increasingly collaborating to establish international standards in education, clinical practice experience and accreditation programmes (Barker, Kinsella & Bossers, 2010)
- An Australian study conducted by Yu, Brown and Farnworth (2017) reveals an increasing number of international students enrolling in occupational therapy programmes in Australia which accounts for 5%-20% of the total student numbers. The majority of these students come from non-English speaking countries and non-Western cultures like Hong Kong, Taiwan, China, India and Korea, which leads to increased student diversity (IEAC, 2013). These students are classified as culturally and linguistically diverse.
International students

• Who has supervised an international student?
• Who has worked with an international student?
What are the issues from an educator perspective?
What are you expecting?

How will you plan this with the MDT? What will your communication style be like to be effective?

How will you communicate to your patient/carers, what communication style will you use?

What might the layout of the accommodation be like?

What drink/meal may you ask the patient to make whilst you are there?
Most people in Hong Kong live in a small flat in tall residential buildings.

Terry lives in a 45 m sq. flat with his parents and sister.

Huge different compared to the UK.
Different ways of having a cup of tea
Challenges on placement - student perspective

◆ Communication
  - Particularly weak at daily English conversation
  - Professional communication

◆ Culture
  - Work culture (Western vs Eastern)
  - Lifestyle
  - Adapting to the NHS

◆ Not used to the learning style
  - Passive learning vs self-directed + enquiry-based

◆ Clinical Reasoning
  - Consider a person holistically, giving them optimal support
Some differences

- Maybe regarded as inpatient, indifferent and passive
- Directness (Speech)
- Silent at the beginning
- Prefer to speak to people we trust or we know them well
- Our primary focus is on efficiency
- Diligent (we have the longest work hours in the world)
- Most expensive housing market in the world (50 sq. feet flat = 70,000 GBP)

It is just our culture. The majority of us are nice and friendly. We love to catch up with the rest of the world.
Chinese Education

Language of instruction: Chinese (Cantonese) for most subjects; English class (several hours p/w)

We know that our learning have been challenged (Sit, 2013)

- **Rote Learning** Rely heavily on repetitive rote-learning and memorisation
- **Silent Learning** Learning styles in classroom is that teachers are authoritarian and students are quiet and obedient to keep silent learning
- **Passive Learning** Diligent, obedient, hardworking, passive and assessment-centred; anxious to cover the syllabus and they want to be sure of the correct answers

- But, we are in general good at Mathematics and memorisation

Class size: 40+
Culture

• Culture is closely linked to OT as it determines how people perceive health, illnesses and occupation (Whiteford & Wilcock, 2000)

• The learning of international practice placement is greatly impacted by culture of both the host country and host organisation as it determines the interactions with clients, assessments and treatment being used (Shimmell et al., 2016)

• International students’ own culture might give different meanings to the same activities in which residents in the host country engage, or they might understand and interpret social behaviours in a different way, resulting in their social interactions being considered inappropriate (Yu, Brown & Farnworth, 2017).
Learning Style

• International students may also possess different educational needs and learning styles from the domestic students. For instance, students from Confucian-based education contexts might be regarded as silent learners as they are not used to questioning or actively expressing or articulating their own thoughts (Choi & Nieminen, 2013; Tran, 2013). This might be misunderstood by placement educators as lacking the initiative or interest to learn (Edgecombe et al., 2013).

• Because of their different learning styles, Educators could experience difficulties to gain a clear picture of the student’s level of knowledge and clinical reasoning skills.
Strategies.....

- Practice Placement Agreement
- Placement preparation at University
- Preparation for all students - home and international
- allowing students to talk to patients/staff informally
- longer induction period
- a manageable range of staff/environments on placements
- negotiate expectations
- regular feedback
- being flexible and prepared to be open-minded
Student suggestions for strategies...

- **Strategies**
  - Educator initiation
  - Encourage questioning & informal conversations

- **Language**
  - Written feedback (acknowledge that international students might not fully understand verbally)
  - Oral dictionary for speaking Yorkshire

- **Cultural / linguistics**
  - Acknowledge cultural differences in terms of manner, courtesy
  - Sometimes being straightforward about this issue, it might be a problem
  - Differentiate stereotypes

- **Confidence & Knowledge**
  - Lower self-esteem (Chan, 2000) due to academic expectations, belief of ability and parental involvement
  - Share experience
  - Clear expectations of the placement
  - Feedback on what areas and if possible instructions on how to improve / succeed
Strategies continued.....
Resources

- Your placement visiting tutor
- OT- Practice placement agreement
- The WFOT Student guide for International Practice Placements
References


