



## Professional Socialisation: Students' Expectations of Being a Physiotherapist or Occupational

B. RICHARDSON; L. GARNHAM; F. POLAND

*School of Allied Health Professions  
University of East Anglia, Norwich NR4 7TJ  
United Kingdom*

**PURPOSE:** to investigate new entrants expectations of being an OT or PT to inform curriculum design. **RELEVANCE:** Current health workforce strategies call for education and training which is multi-professional to promote team work, partnership and collaboration. Shared learning involves participants completing separate programmes leading to separate qualifications but learning alongside each other for selected common areas of study. Some teachers see limitations in a model which emphasizes commonalities to the detriment of differences. An understanding of student expectations of their professions is important to inform a curriculum design that can ensure each student understands professional goals and aspirations. **SUBJECTS:** 8 occupational therapy and 8 physiotherapy new students on an undergraduate education course were strategically selected by sex, age, earlier work experiences, educational background to obtain maximum variation. **METHODS AND MATERIALS:** Semi-structured interviews of 40 ÷ 45 minutes were carried out by 3 researchers at the beginning of the education course. A common interview guide was developed and a phenomenographic approach used to explore the varied conceptions of being an OT or PT. **ANALYSES:** All interviews were transcribed and analysed by a phenomenographic method within and across the professions. Units of meaning were identified which were condensed to a number of themes. Similarities and differences in the transcripts were grouped together. Qualitatively different categories were agreed, described and designated titles and contrasted in relation to each other. **RESULTS:** Complex and varied descriptions of the professional role emerged which identified a variety of potential types of therapist in relation to their chosen career. **CONCLUSIONS:** Tutors may need to consider purposeful teaching strategies that influence the variation of early understandings of professional role in a cohort of OT and PT students in shared learning settings to ensure the development of a distinct professional identity which can help them meet the changing demands of a competitive health care market.

