

Practicum In Aural Rehabilitation In A University Training Program

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University training programs in speech pathology and audiology vary in the emphasis and scope of the theoretical and practical exposure to aural rehabilitation they provide at the graduate and undergraduate levels. Recent modifications in ASHA certification requirements indicate a trend toward encouragement of greater homogeneity in student preparation in all areas of communication theory and clinical practicum. According to Sanders (1971), "We must seek to train students who see aural rehabilitation as a dynamic integrative process, the purpose of which is to facilitate the achievement of at least a satisfactory and productive life style by persons who might otherwise be increasingly handicapped by the impairment of hearing." In view of these statements it seems appropriate to discuss from the educational viewpoint what possible experiences could be provided during a student's professional training which would help him to become a more sophisticated therapist. In providing training in aural rehabilitation it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that students may divide into two groups according to their interest and professional direction: the speech pathology student who requires some understanding of the treatment of the hearing impaired, and the audiology student who needs considerable understanding and practical experience in the rehabilitative aspects of his or her field.

It is the purpose of this article to describe the aural rehabilitation practicum course provided at the University of Illinois for undergraduate and graduate students as well as to offer suggestions for teaching to be utilized with students enrolled in their first practicum experience in this area.

Prior academic preparation for practicum includes course work in audiology, audiometry, hearing science, and the historical and theoretical aspects of aural rehabilitation, as well as other beginning courses in speech, language and related disciplines. The practicum course consists of a weekly class meeting as well as supervised clinical experience. The goals of the course are to develop in the student the ability to:

- (a) relate theory to practice;
- (b) demonstrate empathy for the hearing impaired child and adult;
- (c) communicate with the hearing impaired;
- (d) evaluate diagnostic tools, techniques and approaches to therapy through application and/or systematic investigation;
- (e) interpret audiometric findings and other related information in order to plan and execute an effective therapy program which is designed according to the client's interests, needs and ability;
- (f) make appropriate recommendations and explore referral sources;

- (g) understand and cultivate working relationships with various disciplines involved in the management of the hearing impaired;
- (h) interact effectively in interdisciplinary staffings of cases;
- (i) further improve professional writing skills;
- (j) engage in self evaluation and independent thinking in case management;
and
- (k) demonstrate interviewing and counseling skills with clients and parents.

CLINICAL EXPERIENCE

Each student is provided with clinical assignments which are representative of the hard of hearing population in terms of age, severity of hearing loss and communication needs. These assignments include group and individual sessions with clients scheduled for one or two sessions weekly. A student is assigned five to seven therapy hours per week in order to accrue a minimum of 50 clinical contact hours per semester. For example, a student might be assigned a preschool severely hearing impaired child who has just been fitted with a hearing aid, two adolescents who are not candidates for amplification and a group of geriatrics who are hearing aid candidates in need of auditory training, speech reading and counseling regarding their hearing loss. Supplemental clinical experiences include observation of audiometric evaluation of children and adults, and, if possible, actual supervised experience in hearing screening or participation in complete evaluations of hearing impaired individuals. In addition to therapy contacts in the clinic, satellite clinical training centers are utilized (a local rehabilitation center, home for the aged or a preschool program for the multiply handicapped). Students are also encouraged to observe one of their clients in another setting such as a classroom for the hearing impaired or other academic setting. An evening adult aural rehabilitation program, in addition to the therapeutic aspects, provides an opportunity for the students to interact socially with their clients.

A supervisor is responsible for one to three students per therapy hour. Supervision of each session includes planning and evaluation conferences with the student, supervision during the therapy session, as well as demonstration therapy when appropriate. Under the supervisor's direction, the student prepares all written professional reports including a diagnostic evaluation of all new clients, a final progress report, and if indicated, letters to professional agencies. Students are observed at least once during each therapy session.

Students are also assigned in small groups for weekly micro-teaching sessions. During these sessions they assume the role of the clinician or the hearing impaired individual. The "clinician" plans either a therapy activity or interview situation and then designates the type of hearing loss the "hard of hearing" is to assume. The micro-unit is presented and then evaluated by the group with the guidance of the supervisor. This experience offers the "clinician" an opportunity to

increase his or her facility with clinical materials, equipment and procedures and to experiment with new approaches before applying them in actual client contact. Assuming the role of the "hard of hearing" allows the student to develop critical evaluation skills and a better understanding of the communication problems associated with a hearing loss. For the supervisor, the micro-teaching sessions provide a further medium in which to evaluate the student and modify his or her specific clinical behavior.

CLASSROOM TOPICS

Because the students come to the practicum course with a strong theoretical background, classroom topics for the practicum course stress practical application while enhancing the students' understanding of the field of rehabilitative audiology. Following is a list of lectures, demonstrations, discussions, and other experiences which have been found beneficial.

- (a) Presentation of audio or video taped diagnostic, therapy, interviewing, and counseling sessions.
- (b) Demonstrations of the use and discussion of the limitations of amplification and recording systems, with opportunity for the students to show proficiency in the use of the equipment.
- (c) Simulation of hearing loss conditions through commercial teaching aids such as Zenith's "Getting Through,"¹ Stowe's "How They Hear,"² and personal use of earplugs and amplifying equipment.
- (d) Role playing of an interdisciplinary case staffing and participation in actual staffings whenever possible.
- (e) Demonstration of how to make an ear mold and discussion of acoustic modifications as related to the mold and tubing.
- (f) Experiences in troubleshooting for various types of hearing aids.
- (g) Visits to a hearing aid dealer's office, otology clinic, state school for the deaf, and other sites of professional interest.
- (h) Lectures by guest speakers from the community such as: a hearing aid dealer, social worker, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, Division of Services for Crippled Children speech and hearing consultant, public health nurse, otologist, and manufacturer's representative from an equipment company.
- (i) Student presentation of an individual clinical research project or original therapy idea.
- (j) Presentation of a sample lipreading film as well as other films available for students interested in the historical aspects of aural rehabilitation (e.g., Morkovin films, Utley films).

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1. Available from Zenith Radio Corporation, 6501 West Grand Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60635
 2. Available from Gordon N. Stone and Associates, P.O. Box 233-a, Northbrook, Illinois, 60062.

In addition to the above, there is an ongoing development of a taped lecture library and therapy materials library. The lecture library is composed of audio tapes of guest speakers which are subsequently used in other semesters to supplement reading assignments. For example, our tape library includes topics such as: "What It's Like to Be Hard of Hearing" (presented by a hearing-impaired adult client), "The John Tracy Clinic Program" (presented by a professional associated with the clinic), "Personality of the Geriatric" (presented by a social worker from Action on Aging), and "Problems of the Adolescent" (presented by a social worker from the community mental health agency). The therapy materials library includes visual perception cards, CID vocabulary pictures, Initial Teaching Alphabet materials, the Northampton Chart, tape loops, Language Master cards for environmental sounds, and other commercial and student-created materials. These materials are supplementary to the regular diagnostic and therapeutic tools available in the clinic.

Inherent in this program is the availability of a diversified hearing impaired population. Referrals from university and community agencies and use of public information sources were successful in developing a sufficient clinic population for training program purposes. With an established program known to the community, agency referrals, self-referrals and recommendations from other clients continually add to the clinic population.

Ongoing evaluation by students and instructor is considered necessary in order to effect continual improvement in the quality of the practicum course. Student evaluations at the end of each semester have been used as a basis for modification of the course content and clinical experience. Feedback from students has indicated an exceptionally favorable response to micro-teaching, classroom demonstrations, variety in the caseload and practicum sites, and involvement in audiological assessment in conjunction with rehabilitative experiences. However, the effectiveness of this practicum course is yet to be validated by investigating the professional competency of former students who become employed in a position which requires the services of a rehabilitative audiologist.

SUMMARY

The beginning clinical practicum course in aural rehabilitation for undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Illinois is described. Educational goals are highlighted in the course description. The student's clinical experience and the supervisor's role are discussed and suggested classroom topics are listed. The course includes use of micro-teaching, involvement of community resources, development of an audio-visual teaching aids library and other learning opportunities in addition to therapy with various hearing impaired clients.

REFERENCES

Sanders, Derek A., A case management approach to aural rehabilitation. *Hearing and Speech News*, 39, 4-7 (1971).