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A Letter from the Director – Elaine Keane



Elaine Keane
producing this newsletter for which I am very grateful.

The end of the year always serves as a time to reflect on the year that has passed and this newsletter gives you a small glimpse of the things that have happened. All of the students are gone and the CRECER center has closed until January. The Grand Valley State University (GVSU) students have once again taken on

It has been a great year for CRECER. Over 60 students from 15 different universities participated in CRECER programs this year. In addition to occupational and physical therapy students we had students from outside of healthcare programs participate in our programs. I especially want to mention Sally Bucey who worked this summer on the CRECER webpage. If you have not looked at the website in a while I hope you will take the time to read it and look at the pictures and testimonials. The webpage has a great new look and information is easier than ever to find. In addition to highlighting our programs to potential university students and faculty, the student manual and a cultural competency course based on my doctoral project are also now on password protected parts of the website for student use prior to and during their experience with CRECER. Also this year for the first time we had prior students who are now working as OT practitioners use their vacation time to come and volunteer

with CRECER. It was wonderful talking to them and hearing that CRECER is still having an impact on their lives. The time they gave to CRECER was very much appreciated.

The year brought some hard goodbyes. We lost two of our cherished clients. Veronica at FUNHI and Mateo at CRECER both died this year. We will never forget these special people. We will also be saying goodbye to our location at the Hospital Antiguo. We carry the memories of these people and places as we go forward into the New Year.

When we reopen in January it will be in a new location. We appreciate the generosity of the Universidad Tecnica del Norte in loaning us the space we have been in since March of 2013. Due to their plans to expand we can no longer stay in that location. We are excited about our new collaboration with the Ibarra office for disability services. The municipal government has an overlapping client base with CRECER. It is mutually beneficial to combine our resources to serve the people in and around Ibarra with our programs. We will continue all of our current services and explore areas of program expansion with the municipal workers whom we have already partnered for a variety of projects. *(Continued on next page)*

A Letter from the Director – Elaine Keane Continued

Connections with additional universities continue. In January our first OTD student from Pacific University in Oregon will arrive to complete a level II fieldwork followed by a specialty rotation. In late February and early March, we will welcome student groups from both campuses of Gannon University, the Florida OTD students followed by the Erie Pennsylvania campus MOT students. We will see many familiar schools returning during the middle of the year and later in the year we will be hosting students from La Trobe University in Australia. Updates will be posted on the CRECER Facebook page throughout the year. It looks like CRECER will have another good year "to grow."

About CRECER

by Erin Mallekoote

CRECER is an outpatient pediatric clinic in Ibarra, Ecuador. Exciting things are happening at CRECER and plans are moving forward on the rehabilitation project, which will be used to increase access to occupational therapy services for individuals with disabilities in the community. In fact, the clinic is currently in the process of relocating in order to reach out to more residents and include other specialty therapeutic services. GVSU OT students provided treatment for a wide variety of diagnoses during their most recent trip in the months of October and November. These included Autism Spectrum Disorder, visual deficits, fine/gross motor deficits, developmental delays, behavioral issues, brachial plexus injuries, cerebral palsy, sensory processing disorder, and many more. Thanks to the generous donors, interventions were plentiful and the students were able to provide a wide array of services! For example, ultrasound therapy was

provided to assist with scarring and active range of motion, and equipment of varying textures and stimulations were utilized to treat sensory processing disorders. These resources were donated to the clinic upon the student's departure in order to promote sustainability of OT treatment and progression towards client goals.



CRECER Clinic



CRECER Clinic

Case Example: Angel

by Crystal Barchacky



Angel

Looking at the photograph of Angel, you can tell that he is a very happy client, one who is full of smiles and laughs throughout his therapy session. However, what you cannot see is how much progress he has made over the last two years since beginning therapy in March of 2014. Angel has a diagnosis of cerebral palsy and hydrocephalus. The primary effects of cerebral palsy are impairments of muscle tone, gross and fine motor functions, balance, control, coordination, reflexes, and posture. Angel also is affected by the effects of hydrocephalus, which include balance impairments, development delays, vision impairments, (Continued on next page)

and swelling of the head, which can greatly affect head control. Fortunately, Angel has overcome many of these obstacles that both of these diagnoses present.

When Angel first started receiving occupational therapy (OT) services, his goals included: to improve visual tracking fluidly, head and trunk control, and to address high tone in both his bilateral lower extremities and bilateral thumbs. During Angel's OT sessions, he completed activities to increase his voluntary motor control, to increase independence in grasping objects, sitting unsupported, tolerating prone position, and being able to roll from supine to prone. Angel required total to maximum assistance with grasp and release, sitting, rolling, and demonstrated very poor to no head control while in prone and sitting. Throughout 2014, Angel continued to make improvements in all areas. In 2015, Angel's progress increased rapidly and he demonstrated improved head control while sitting with support and while lying in prone. He was able to complete rolling with moderate assist for initiation. In the early- to mid-2016, Angel started to progress enough that he was able to not only reach for items, but he was able to grasp some items as well. His fluidity while tracking improved greatly; however, it was still delayed. He was only requiring minimal assistance during rolling and was able to tolerate both supported sitting and prone for extended periods of time. In addition, a goal of distinguishing between the colors: red, blue, green and yellow was added to his treatment plan.

In mid-September of 2016 he was able to distinguish the difference between the two colors with 100% accuracy. Angel is able to sit with minimal support at the pelvis. He tolerates prone for approximately ten minutes, and he is able to not only lift his head but rotate it side to side while lying in prone. He requires increased time to roll to supine, back to prone, and to the right and left, but is able to complete the task without assistance. In addition, his tracking is relatively fluid in all planes, with minimum nystagmus present. Due to his progress in recognizing colors, the goal of recognizing shapes was added and circle was introduced to him. Angel has improved vastly over the last two years from not even being able to lift his own head, grasp objects, or roll over to being able to complete all three of those tasks. *Crystal Barchacky was a Level II student from Winston-Salem State University from September through November 2016.

About FUNHI

by Zoe Brennan

Fundacion Unidos para Nuestros Hijos (FUNHI) is an adult day center for adults with developmental disabilities. There are currently five individuals with a combination of diagnoses including cerebral palsy, developmental delays, and psychological disabilities that attend the day center for approximately three hours every morning throughout the week. At FUNHI, GVSU occupational therapy students provided the individuals with a combination of individual and group fine motor, gross motor, social, and leisure activities including but not limited to parachute games, decoupage, painting nails, dancing, tic tac toe, scavenger hunt, bowling, puzzles, play dough, beading, obstacle course, etc. Providing the individuals at FUNHI with these opportunities is essential to their well-being, daily functioning, and overall quality of life.



FUNHI Clinic



FUNHI Clinic

Disability Awareness Day

by Cara Murray

This international experience provided students the opportunity to participate in Disability Awareness Day, which involved an outdoor celebration with an evening of adaptive sports. Occupational therapy students met and collaborated with psychology students from a local university to play sports with individuals with disabilities. Students used wheelchairs to play a full game of basketball and assisted children with cerebral palsy in completing a game of bocce ball. Students also played a game of soccer while blindfolded against a team of individuals with limited vision. Participating in these adaptive sports provided students with a new perspective on sport activities for individuals with disabilities, and also allowed students to interact with community members in Ibarra. Students left this experience with a fresh perspective and greater appreciation of Ecuadorian culture.



Wheelchair Basketball



Asilo Nursing Home

About Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac

by April Miller

Asilo Madre Teresa de Marillac is a home to elderly individuals with diagnoses such as Parkinson's Disease, dementia, Alzheimer's, stroke, and

sensory processing disorder. GVSU students organized and administered treatment sessions to anywhere from 10-20 residents on three separate days. Activities included a gross motor warm up, which



consisted of dancing, tossing a ball, hitting a balloon, ring toss, bean bag toss, and parachute activities. Fine motor activities, such as coloring, painting with sponges, brushes and cotton swabs; owl-making crafts; maraca making, and jewelry making. All activities were created to address social participation, leisure activities, and fine/gross motor control. All residents were engaged in at least one, if not more, of the activities provided each day.

When working specifically with an individual with Parkinson's Disease, LVST Big and Loud movements were incorporated into his sessions. A sensory board was made for another individual who did well with a fidget item. Another individual spoke English and was from Colorado. This man requested a hot dog, as this is not a food they serve in the nursing home. The students and faculty were able to follow through on this and brought the man three hotdogs. This shows how dedicated the GVSU students and faculty will go to build rapport with clients.

Overall, the time GVSU students spent at this facility was both beneficial for the students' learning and beneficial for the residents' well-being. The exposure to the different culture, working around language barriers, and adapting tasks for a variety of residents was a great learning experience for the students. Lastly, the students were able to donate their extra supplies to the facility, which recently hired an activities aide who will ensure that the newly acquired materials are utilized.

Therapeutic Equipment

by Ash Smith

As occupational therapy students in Ecuador we were encouraged to play a unique role in helping the individuals at CRECER, FUNHI, and Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac engage in a myriad of occupations. One of the skills necessary for this placement was to incorporate creative treatment approaches with our traditional interventions. A creative treatment approach can make a significant impact on whether the client will form rapport and agree to participate with you, the therapist. Frequently, creative solutions to functional problems can come in the form of devices created to assist or substitute for impaired functions. These devices could include adaptive equipment, assistive technology, and/or sensory integration products. One strategy used during our time in Ecuador was the creation of a homemade sensory pad.

On the first day at Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac, we met a client who was exhibiting sensory deprivation in the form of repetitive banging, fidgeting, agitation, and resistance to participation. The client appeared tuned out from the environment, presented with minimal verbalizations, lack of eye contact and had limited response to stimuli. Throughout the session we attempted to increase his participation by incorporating sensory-rich materials. By

the end of the session, the students had a greater understanding of this gentleman's sensory needs. Over the next two days, a sensory board was created out of materials brought from the United States including a placemat, Scotch felt pads, rubber bands, balloons, netting, pipe cleaner, a beanbag, and a fidget. The sensory pad was a creative solution designed to safely stimulate and soothe this client as well as assist him with relating to and interacting with his environment.

When the client received the sensory pad he immediately began manipulating the objects and then smiled. During the session this client presented with an increased willingness to work with the occupational therapy students. He was also able to engage in the first activity for a longer duration than the previous sessions. Overall, this sensory pad provided the client as well as the team another outlet to achieve therapeutic aims.



Client with homemade sensory pad

Ultrasound
Donation



Wheelchair
Cushion
Donation



Donations

by Erin Mallekoote

The generous donated supplies, equipment, and financial support made this trip possible! A huge thank you to all who contributed. Assessments were utilized in order to distinguish what occupational limitations existed in the wide array of clients. A diverse assortment of supplies and equipment were used for OT interventions at CRECER, FUNHI, and Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac. In addition, specific supplies were donated to individual clients who were identified with a particular need. For example, a wheelchair cushion was given to client at the Asilo Madre Teresa de Marrillac nursing home whom was suffering from pressure sores and poor seated positioning due to his stiff, overused and incorrect sized wheelchair. Also, a sensory board was created with a mix of supplies for a client who was sensory seeking and provided with little stimulation in his daily routine. Lastly, donations were divided between the three facilities in order to promote sustainability of OT treatment upon GVSU student departure.

La Universidad Tecnica del Norte Lecture

by Megan Sundberga

On November 1, 2016, three occupational therapy (OT) hybrid students and one traditional student from Grand Valley State University (GVSU) had the unique opportunity to attend a lecture at La Universidad Tecnica del Norte, presented by (the world famous) Jeanine Beasley, EdD, OTR, CHT, FAOTA. Jeanine spoke to a lecture hall filled with physical therapy (PT) students about arthritis of the hand. During her lecture, Jeanine taught the PT students how to distinguish rheumatoid arthritis (RA) of the hand from osteoarthritis of the hand, and presented four different hand orthoses that are commonly utilized for RA and osteoarthritis. The four lucky OT students who were able to attend the lecture modeled the splints for the PT students. The PT students at the university appeared eager to learn and presented multiple questions for Jeanine, followed by a grand applause at the end of the lecture. The PT students' enthusiasm was emotionally moving, and brought tears to Jeanine and the four OT students' eyes. Jeanine and the OT students expressed how grateful they were for the opportunity by presenting the university with a gift. The experience was wonderful for everyone involved; Jeanine plans to work with the university on potential research opportunities and may return again to lecture on a different topic!

Cultural Competency

by Shanna Thelen

Cultural competency was a big component of preparation for this international education experience. Elaine was kind enough to put together a module focused on the Ecuadorian culture, developing self-awareness, developing awareness of cultures different from our own, and skill-building. Immersing ourselves in these modules helped us prepare to be culturally knowledgeable, which then carried over into being clinically competent. Within these module sections were resources such as journal and book articles, snippets from the Ecuadorian Constitution and the World Health Organization, and CRECER specific sources. Upon studying and analyzing the presented information, we were provided with journal prompts that we were asked to answer in order to qualitatively display our cultural competence. However, developing our cultural competence did not begin and end before the trip. Rather the module contained first impression and reflection components, so our cultural development could be an experience rather than a quick acquirement.

Our group was also fortunate to physically immerse ourselves in the culture.



Presentation of gift at La Universidad
Tecnica del Norte lecture

Elaine prepared excursions centered on expanding our existing knowledge of the culture, and tying information learned in readings to reality. Examples of some cultural immersion were touring churches in Quito, visiting San Antonio de Ibarra, Cotacachi, Mindo, and local cemeteries. Certain expectations were developed upon completing the cultural competency module; however, it was the cultural immersion activities, which provided true clarity into the habits, roles, routines, and values of the Ecuadorian people.

GoFundMe & Donors

by Zoe Brennan

The cost of this experience can be initially overwhelming. However, it should not deter you from applying for this experience if this is truly meaningful to you. There are a few strategies to earn money towards this educational experience and it is possible to pay for it in its entirety. Some students chose to arrange a GoFundMe website page, take an extra loan, or write support letters. Personally, I wrote a support letter to close family and friends explaining

the purpose of the trip and the benefits of this educational experience to me personally and professionally. I explained the expenses of the trip and provided a method for payment via mail. I received enough support to pay for the experience in its entirety and had enough left over to buy therapy supplies to take with me and donate to the facilities. I understand that it is hard to ask close friends and family for a monetary donation. I encourage you to remember

that if someone does not want to or is financially unable to donate, then they won't and they will wish you the best anyways. Secondly, more people than you would think truly want to help you and are passionate about supporting educational experiences, such as this one. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience and I highly encourage you to not let expenses be your reasoning for not committing to this amazing experience.

Occupational Balance

by Cara Murray

This international fieldwork experience provided students with a healthy balance of work and leisure. Upon arriving in Ecuador, students explored the culturally rich city of Quito and toured numerous basilicas and other historical sites. A trip to Mindo exposed group members to an orchid garden, butterfly house, a trip down a river on inflatable tubes, a tour of how chocolate is made, and a zip lining expedition through the Forest of the Clouds. Students also visited natural hot springs, a wood carving town filled with wood-working galleries and local artists, and Cotacachi, a town that predominantly sells handmade genuine leather products. The group took a boat ride on Lago Cuicocha, a crater lake located inside of an active volcano, and toured Laguna de Yaguarcocha, a beautiful lake with an interactive park along its shores. The final day in Ecuador was spent shopping in a local market at Otavalo and visiting Cascada de Peguche, a beautiful cascading waterfall with trails to access and explore the nature surrounding this site. Students were provided with an international experience that was rich in social interaction, cultural integration, and exploration of the beautiful landscape of Ecuador.



Zip lining in Mindo



Boat tour on Lago Cuicocha

Cultural Immersion

by Crystal Barchacky

If somebody would have asked me 3 months ago whether or not I thought I was culturally competent, my answer would have undoubtedly been yes. I have visited 4 continents and would consider myself somewhat “worldly.” However, prior to my trip to Ibarra, Ecuador I had never spent more than a week in any given country. My time in Ibarra has shown me that the nuances of a culture can easily escape the modern traveler. Schedules, tour guides, and travel blogs can give you a sense of understanding when it comes to the broad history of a country or its attractions. Living in Ibarra, however, has taught me many things that you wouldn’t find in a brochure. Although I have learned a lot, and am still learning every day, there are 4 main topics that I would like to write about. Those topics are greetings, conversation topics, food, and travel.

One key difference I have seen between American and Ecuadorian culture would be in the way one individual greets another. For instance whenever a visitor enters a room, it is customary for everyone present to stop what they are doing and take the time to properly greet the newcomer. This can be especially important for western occupational therapy (OT) practitioners to understand, as they are expected to stop working with the patient momentarily to offer proper greetings as well. Where in western culture it is generally acceptable to offer a strictly verbal greeting in most situations, most encounters in Ecuador often begin with a handshake that consist of cupping the others hands with both of yours. Or the greeting may include a kiss on the cheek. This particular greeting is generally for after meeting someone more than once or when meeting a friend.

Conversational topics also differ in Ecuador from those of the United States. When touching on introductory questions, there seems to be little that Ecuadorians find too personal compared to what most individuals from the States would consider sometimes taboo. This may include the typical questions such as marital status and whether or not you have children, but also may expand to questions of religion or who you may be voting for in the upcoming presidential elections. These are topics that are generally reserved for friends and families in western cultures. This line of questioning may be uncomfortable for some, but should generally be viewed as someone just trying to get a better sense of who you are rather than someone trying to dig into what most Americans view as their personal life.

Another aspect of Ecuadorian culture that I have embraced is the difference in cuisine. The types of foods they eat, the way the meals are presented, and their portion sizes are much different than in the U.S. The typical foods eaten differ due to what is available locally. For instance, many things that are exotic in the U.S. are both common place and inexpensive here and vice versa. “Exotic” fruit such as dragon fruit or passion fruit can be purchased for \$0.30 - \$2.00. Most meals are brought out in courses with everything being included within the price, something that historically used to be more prevalent in the U.S. but has taken a back seat to the fast paced American lifestyle. In fact, most things seem “slower” in Ecuador, and most individuals do not view time in the same way that western cultures do.

Traveling around Ecuador is the last component that I will touch on. Traveling around Ibarra is very inexpensive and I tend to walk everywhere I can. I enjoy being able to walk around and explore, and if I need to go somewhere that is not in a walkable distance (over 2 miles), taking a cab is relatively cheap and a bus is extremely cheap. In addition, you can flag or hail a bus down where ever you are on the street. I have taken the bus to surrounding towns by myself (approximately a 50-minute bus ride to a neighboring town) for only \$0.55. Overall, I really enjoy the public transportation system that is provided in Ecuador.

I am nothing but joyful of the experience thus far. I have not only learned a lot about the Latino culture and OT in pediatrics, but I have learned about myself. I have learned about my perceptions of the Latino culture and of my own. I have also learned how to shed some of my predispositions about how things “should be done,” and have instead embraced the opportunity to learn new things.

*Crystal Barchacky was a Level II student from Winston-Salem State University from Sept. – Nov. 2016.