s the demands of working in a health care environment increase, potential fieldwork educators may be tempted to decline extra duties, including supervising students. But clinicians should keep in mind the many benefits that partnering with area educational facilities provide for fieldwork educators and their health care settings.

Fieldwork educators say that fieldwork students prompt occupational therapy staff to stay current with treatment techniques and research related to client care, infuse staff with new energy and enthusiasm for their work, and provide a potential future source for quality employees. Fieldwork offered the opportunity for the site to evaluate students for future employment. In addition, through working with students, the supervisors had the opportunity to contribute to developing employee skills such as clinical reasoning and time management. Students’ contributions to the workplace were also highlighted in this study, including providing quality improvement and in-service activities, extending opportunities for program development, and applying research evidence to practice (evidence-based practice).

These benefits can readily be available to fieldwork sites, particularly if potential learning opportunities are identified in advance of a student’s arrival. The academic fieldwork coordinator can assist in tailoring learning opportunities to the appropriate educational level of the student and the learning objectives of the Level I or Level II fieldwork experience.

Another aspect to consider is the influence that working with students has on the professional growth of the fieldwork educator. Participants (n=10) in an electronic focus group representing pediatric and adult rehabilitation practice settings throughout the United States indicated that working with students provided an opportunity to give back to the educational community that supported them and to build relationships with individuals in the academic setting. Study respondents said that involvement in research projects, support for evidence-based practice, and access to the library of the academic setting helped their professional development and ultimately their practice.

Are you ready to take advantage of the benefits provided to you through your work with students? Contact your local school today to see how you can give back to your profession, promote the quality of care provided at your work site, and benefit your own professional development through working with students.

References

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