

# Health and Human Services Students' Knowledge of Occupational Therapy



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## Research Questions

- 1) What do students in Health and Human Services academic programs in a New York State private college know about occupational therapy (OT)?
- 2) Does knowledge of OT differ among students enrolled in Health and Human Services academic programs according to their discipline?

## Literature Review

A review of literature was completed to assess the need for further research and identify the level of knowledge of OT among healthcare professionals.

### Low Knowledge of OT

- Medical and health science students demonstrate poor to moderate knowledge of OT and their roles and work settings (Olaoye et al., 2016).
- Allied health students have a general understanding of the main roles of OT, but they do not recognize the range of services provided (Seruya, 2015).
- A majority of physicians and nurses report not having adequate knowledge of OT (Abu Tariah et al., 2011).

### How People Learn about OT

- Most students learn about OT from friends, colleagues, and personal contact with OTs, rather than through formal education (Alotaibi et al., 2015, Deitch, Gutman & Factor, 1994, Olaoye et al., 2016).

### Benefits

- Clients may exhibit improved function given the opportunity to receive OT services (Abu Tariah et al., 2011).
- Collaboration allows for provision of optimal client care (Alotaibi et al., 2015).

## Method

### Participants

- 233 students enrolled in the Physical Therapy (PT), Social Work (SW), Nursing, and Communication Sciences and Disorders/Speech-Language Pathology (CSD/SLP) Programs at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY.
- Inclusion criteria: students between the ages of 18-25 years old and in their 2nd, 3rd, or 4th year of study.

### Process

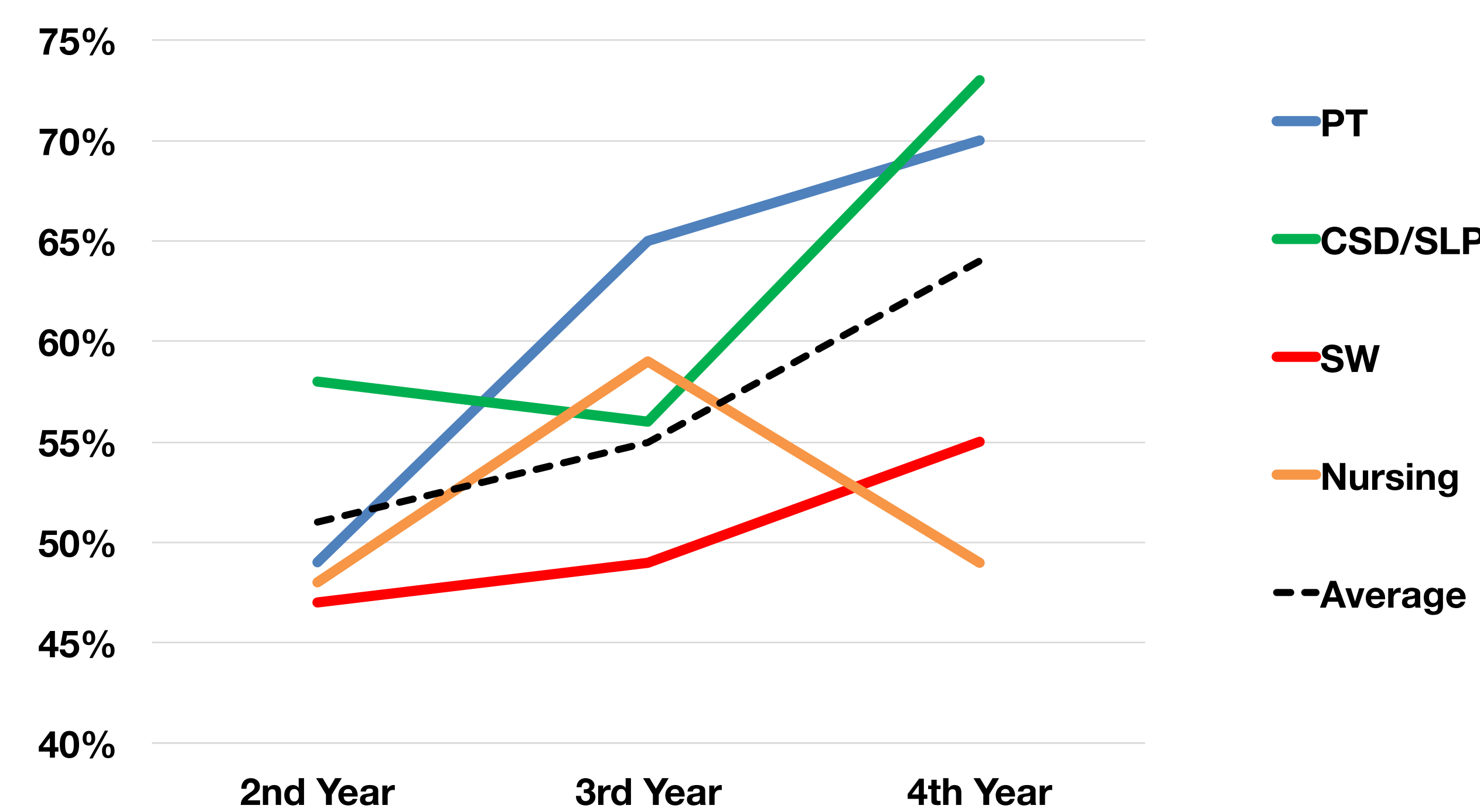
- Researchers contacted the chairpersons and faculty members of PT, SW, Nursing and CSD/SLP academic programs.
- Researchers explained the purpose of the study and requested participation from students in respective classrooms.
- Participants completed "The Knowledge of Occupational Therapy Survey".

## Data Analysis

Analysis was completed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was run between variables including major, year, and knowledge of OT. Descriptive statistics were based on the demographic information.

## Results

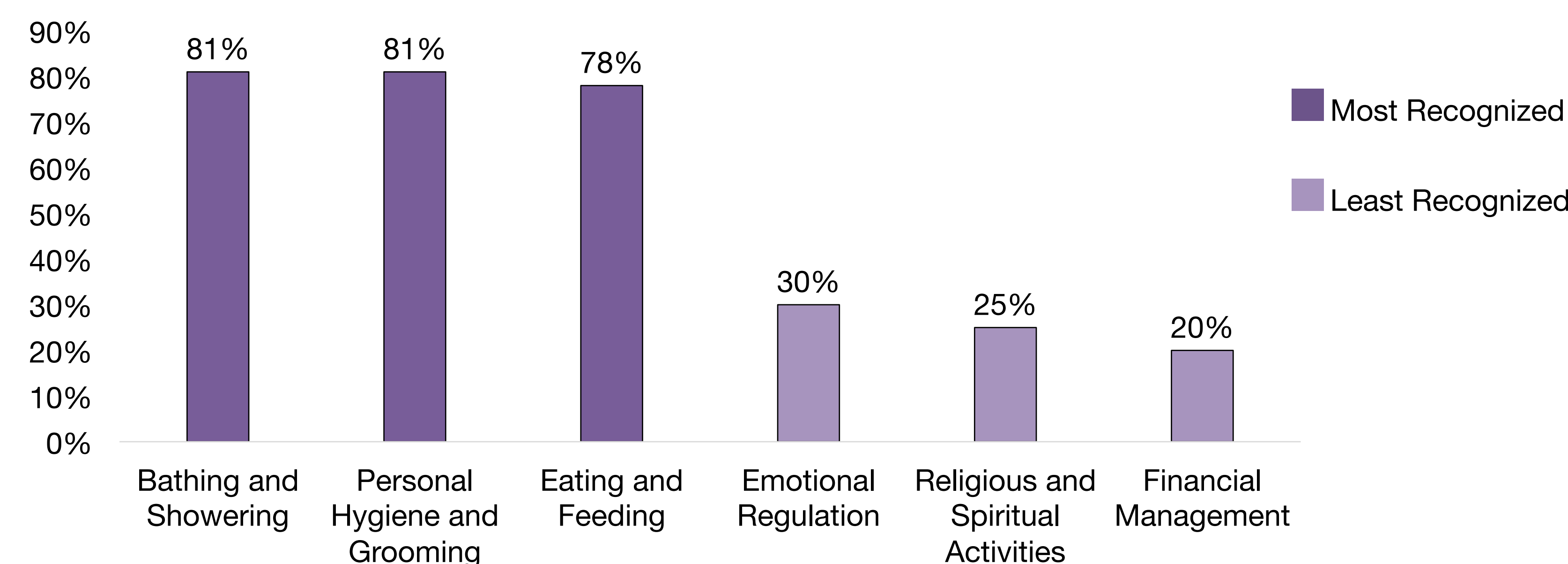
Students' Knowledge of OT According to Year of Study



### Group Comparisons

- Difference in knowledge among 4th year students and 2nd year students was statistically significant ( $p < .005$ ).
- Difference in knowledge among PT students and nursing students was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).
- Difference in knowledge among PT students and SW students was statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ).

Most and Least Recognized Areas of OT Practice



## Discussion

### Relation to previous literature

Seruya (2015) found that allied health students had a general understanding of the primary roles of OT, however, they did not recognize the full range of services provided. The current study supports these findings, with results indicating that allied health students understand 58% of the entire scope of OT.

Of our participants, PT students demonstrated the highest level of knowledge relating to OT. This supports the findings of Abu Tariah et al. (2011), whose results showed that PTs were more informed about the scope of OT than physicians and nurses; however, the overall level of OT knowledge was limited among all three groups.

### Conclusion

Comprehension of OT differs among students in the Health and Human Services academic programs at Nazareth College and varies by year of study. PT and CSD/SLP students demonstrate a greater knowledge of OT, which may be due to the close learning proximity of PT, CSD/SLP, and OT in the York Wellness & Rehabilitation Institute. Furthermore, students' general knowledge of OT increases with year of study, which may result from increased exposure to and formal education regarding the OT profession.

## Implications for Practice

The findings of this study suggest that more interdisciplinary education allowing for students to learn about the roles of different healthcare team members should be incorporated into the curriculum of all healthcare disciplines' academic programs. Furthermore, OT students and practitioners must advocate for the profession and educate peers to improve awareness of the scope of OT and opportunities for future clients.

## References

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