Promoting occupational therapy in virtual environments: Project-based learning in Second Life®

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What is Second Life? What can OT do there?

Second Life® is a virtual world that allows you to create an avatar to represent yourself and use that avatar to meet other people and explore different events and communities. In Second Life® you have the option to change your appearance, attend classes, participate in meetings and groups, and build virtual objects. For some people Second Life® provides opportunities for social interaction and is a way to meet people who have similar interests. Second Life® also provides a creative outlet for many people.

Second Life® provides Jefferson OT students the opportunity to create a community in which we can educate other users about what occupational therapy is as well as some of the different populations we serve. It also allows us to use pictures, videos, and other interactive materials to help us present information to our visitors.

Second Life® provides a unique way of reaching out to people we otherwise may not have the opportunity to meet. We can provide people information and resources about different OT topics such as mental health, caring for older adults, and how to incorporate universal design into their home environments. As students we learn to present information to reach a wide range of people and interact with people from all over the world. This unique opportunity allows us to advocate for OT and become comfortable educating people and answering questions about OT topics.

Steps in Project Based Learning at the Occupational Therapy Center at Jefferson in Second Life®:
1. Faculty advisor and students jointly determine topic for expanded or new exhibit
2. Students and faculty discuss sources of information about the topic(s) from published articles
3. Students identify key findings from literature that have practical application for consumers and are feasible to implement in a 3D environment
4. Students present their ideas for creating an educational exhibit and brainstorm with their peers and faculty to refine these ideas.
5. Students further explore ways to implement the exhibit ideas with the faculty director and other faculty members as resources.
6. Students and faculty plan and implement a special event within the virtual world to present the new topic and exhibit, inviting guests from various groups and creating a powerpoint or video presentation.

Acknowledgments

Funding for this project was provided by the Jefferson School of Health Professions, Department of Occupational Therapy and the Jefferson former College of Health Professions Committee on Research.

References

For further information see our blog at: http://otsecondlife.wordpress.com/