

ABSTRACT

Author: Katherine Adams

Title: USING VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCES TO ENHANCE CLINICAL LEARNING IN THE MEDICAL SETTING: OUTCOMES AND BENEFITS FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

Thesis Advisor: Heather Warner

Department: Department of Communication Disorders and Honors College

Year: 2018

The Neuro Speech Program at Yale New Haven Hospital is a volunteer program developed as an opportunity for undergraduate students to gain experience within a medical setting. This program introduces volunteers to the expectations and demands of a medically-based speech-language pathologist (SLP) and provides an opportunity for the volunteer to interact with patients who have a variety of communication disorders. This study investigated the clinical learning outcomes of 17 Communication Disorders students from Southern Connecticut State University who volunteered for at least 20 hours with the Neuro Speech Program at Yale New Haven Hospital. Results from volunteer responses were compared to 17 students from Southern Connecticut State University who are at the same academic level within the Communication Disorders Department, serving as the non-volunteer control group. A mixed method approach of both qualitative and quantitative data, via pre- and post-assessment and report of tasks, was used to analyze participant responses. The study aimed to determine if this experience targeted clinical learning outcomes which include comfort, understanding, working knowledge and confidence interacting with patients and professionals in the medical setting. Analysis of pre- and post-assessment surveys found that volunteers gained: comfort assisting the SLP and other professionals, an understanding of the types of activities within the medical setting, and working knowledge of demands and expectations of a SLP.