

BACKGROUND

The University of South Florida (USF) School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences (SPTRS) began a Multiple Sclerosis Standardized Training and Education Program (MS STEP UP) in 2013 in collaboration with the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS) Mid Florida Chapter. The program is modeled after the original MS STEP UP program developed by faculty at the UNC Chapel Hill DPT program. This 2-year program consists of case based learning modules, observation in MS clinics, clinical experiences, community service, and advocacy related to MS.

Objective: To track changes in competency ratings of USF DPT students using the MS Competency Rating Scale before and after participation in year 1 and year 2 of the MS STEP UP program.

METHODS

The MS STEP UP Track Competencies Rating Scale was used to assess whether increased knowledge and competency occurred through participation in the program. The scale consists of 12 leadership domains, which are outlined in Figure 1. Seven scholars within four cohorts completed the competency scale and were compared to other students at the same level of preparation in the DPT program. The cohorts consisted of: 2 incoming scholars, 2 second year scholars, 2 outgoing scholars, and 1 scholar that graduated in 2016.

Competency data of all scholars were averaged together and results are shown in Figure 1; the value of 1 = poor, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = above average, and 5 = excellent knowledge.

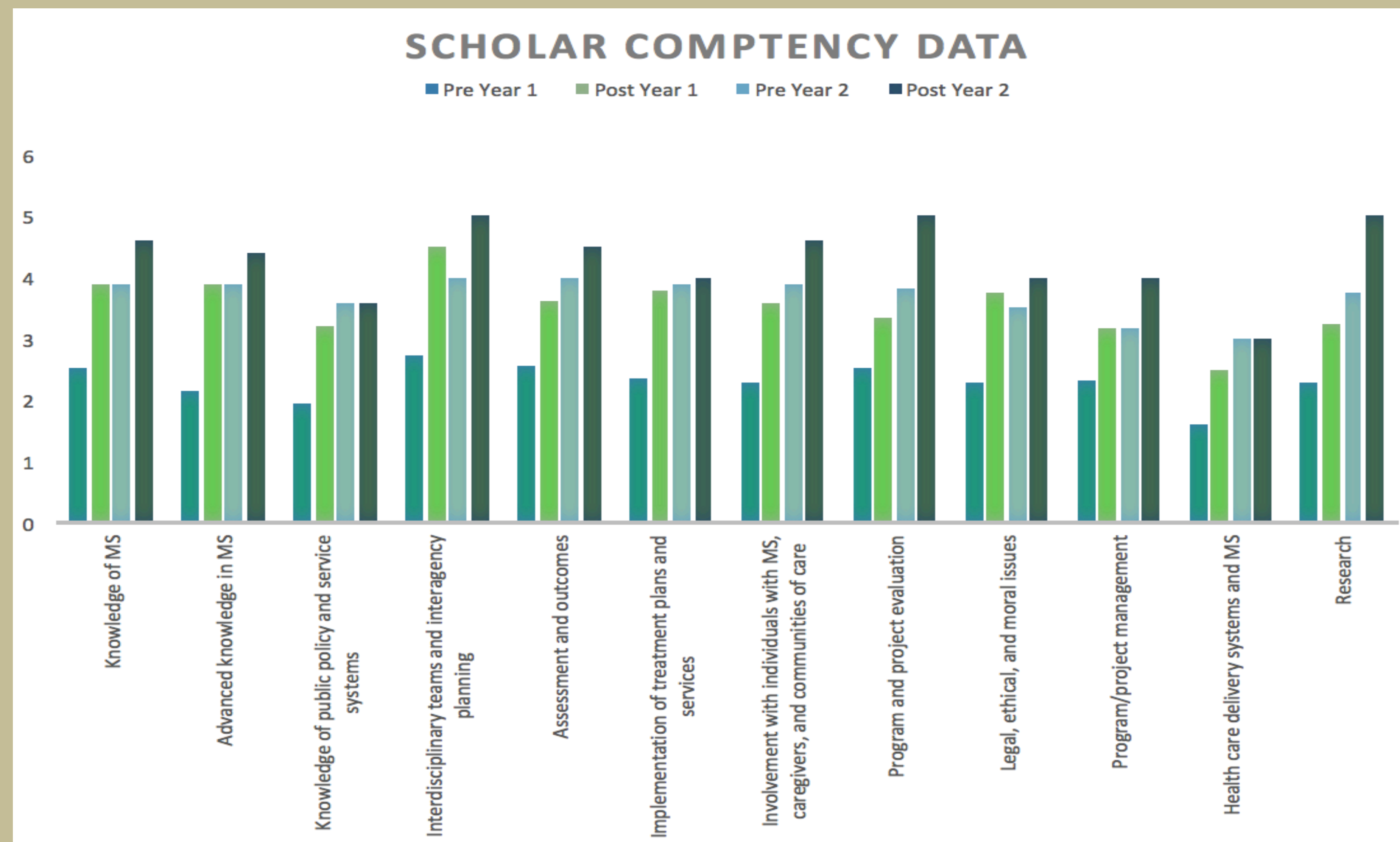


Figure 1. Changes in MS Track Competencies Rating Scale Scores among USF MS Scholars

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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RESULTS

Data revealed that scholars felt the least competent when entering the program and the most competent after graduation from the program. Each year in the program, scholars perceived growth in each of the 12 domains. At the conclusion of the program, scholars felt most competent in the domains of interdisciplinary teams and planning, program and project evaluation, and research. Outgoing and graduated scholars felt the least competent in the domains of public policy and service systems, implementation of treatment, legal, ethical, and moral issues, program/project management, and health care delivery systems.

DISCUSSION

Throughout the duration of the MS STEP UP program, knowledge in the twelve domains improved as evidenced by increased MS Track Competency Rating Scale scores. The program does a remarkable job with providing information and opportunities that encourage learning, such as volunteer experiences, development and implementation of the NMSS's Free from Fall program, and clinical experiences with physical and occupational therapists, neurologists, and speech-language pathologists who are experienced with MS. The scholars have demonstrated great achievements within most of the domains, however, would benefit from additional learning opportunities/clinical experiences that address the lower scoring areas on the competency scale.

Conclusion: The MS STEP UP program will educate USF DPT students in the best evidence-based practice for persons with MS while simultaneously helping the greater Tampa Bay and Florida MS communities. Students in the MS STEP UP program show improving competencies in MS care as evidenced by improvement in scores from the beginning to end of the program. Student confidence and perceived competency increases may be correlated with the additional coursework, clinical experiences, and volunteer opportunities (See Figures 2, 3 and 4).



Figure 2. Scholars with guest speaker Dr. Freeman-Levay at the Free from Falls program.



Figure 3. Scholars and USF DPT students at the annual MS walk in the Tampa Bay area.



Figure 4. Scholars raising awareness at a Rays Baseball game in St. Petersburg, Florida.

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