Variable levels of perceived stress and anxiety reported by physiotherapy students during clinical placements – quantitative data

Deborah Gallasch, Amy Conlon-Leard, Michelle Hardy, Anna Phillips, Gisela Van Kessel, Kathy Stiller
(Kathy.Stiller@sa.gov.au)
BACKGROUND

> Stress/anxiety increased during clinical placements.
> Positive and negative impacts of stress.
> Limited amount of evidence re PT students.

METHODS

> Prospective, mixed methods study, Uni SA, 3rd year, n = 159.
> 5-week placements: acute care, primary and ambulatory care, rehabilitation.
> VAS stress/anxiety baseline, weekly over 5 weeks, academic performance.
13% - very high mean stress/anxiety (>1 SD above mean).
Highest stress/anxiety during acute care placements.
Higher baseline, mean and peak stress/anxiety negatively correlated with academic outcomes.
Those aware of resources and skill development had lower stress/anxiety.
DISCUSSION

- Clinical placements stressful, especially acute care.
- Mean stress/anxiety mid-range but highly variable.
- Adversely affected academic outcomes.
- Baseline VAS stress/anxiety correlated with all other outcomes – screening tool to identify at-risk students and provide targeted interventions?
- Awareness of resources important.