

Training family therapy students in conceptual and observation skills relating to the therapeutic alliance: an evaluation

John Carpenter,^a Valentin Escudero^b and Mark Rivette^c

This paper describes a training intervention to develop students' conceptual and observation skills relating to the therapeutic alliance (TA) in family therapy. An evaluation methodology was developed and piloted. The knowledge and observation skills of family therapy students pre- and post-training were assessed in comparison to a non-intervention group of experienced clinicians. Students' mean scores on the knowledge measure improved significantly from 43 per cent to 74 per cent ($p < 0.001$) and on the observation test from 43 per cent to 65 per cent, although this failed to reach statistical significance ($p = 0.08$). There were no significant changes in the clinicians' scores over the same period. The clinicians' knowledge was higher initially, but the students had caught up after six months.

In conclusion, training students in conceptual and observational skills relating to the therapeutic alliance may have a measurable effect. A 'stepwise' methodology for demonstrating the relationship between training in TA and outcomes for families is proposed.