Review Of Practicum Site: St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton Forensic Service

Name of Site: St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton, Forensic Service
Duration of practicum: July 15, 2007 – April 29, 2008

Process of Application and General Information to Consider

- What was the process/requirements for applying?
  
  No organized process, just a CV and letter of intent for the supervisor of the specific unit

- Did you apply to the site or directly to a supervisor? Directly to supervisor

- Is there a brochure or website for the site? Yes, but it’s for interns (still applicable though) - I appended it

- Do you have the contact information for this site? If so, can you specify the name of the site contact person, phone number, address and email address. See brochure

- When was the deadline to apply? I don’t think they have a formal deadline

- When does the practicum start and finish? Sept-April but it was negotiable

- What’s involved in the interview and who conducts it?
  
  Supervisor conducts it, just the basic questions – what do you want from this practicum, what is your experience with X, Y and Z

- How many days per week or hours per week were you at the site? Was there flexibility? Who determined the schedule?
  
  Very flexible, we negotiated the schedule, it was 8-10 hours/day, twice per week, July – April

- Was there flexibility to move around the site (i.e., doing rotations in various departments?)
  
  Limited, but I think it would depend on the department
Clinical Training

- Opportunities for assessment? (if so, what type of assessments did you do? Note: an intake interview for a potential therapy client is not the same as full a psychological assessment; also there are different types of psyc assessments).

  Excellent – all I did was assess (which is what I wanted) – diagnostic assessment (X1), Criminal responsibility assessments (X2), Full psych assessments and recidivism risk assessments (many)

- What assessment instruments were you trained on?

  RBANS, WASI, WAIS (intellectual/neurocognitive inventories), Hare PCL-R, HCR-20, VRAG (Forensic tools), Trails, Stroop, other neurocognitive tests, PAI, MMPI, others

- What was the process of training?
  - Direct observation of your supervisor? As much as I wanted
  - Reading on your own? Lots at first (many hours), then it became optional

- Opportunities for treatment? None (although on other units there are many)

- What was the client population? (approximate ages) 18 and up (the oldest I saw was 67), mostly men

- Opportunities to conduct couples therapy? Group therapy?

  No (although there are opportunities for group therapy on other wards)

- What percentage of time was devoted to direct contact 10%, report writing 50%, other chart review, supervision and observation, reading, etc 40%

- What was the theoretical orientation used for treatment?

  They like CBT & DBT, don’t ever mention the word “dynamic” unless it’s followed by “team environment” or something of the sort

- Did you receive any specialized training (i.e., to work with specific populations or deal with specific mental health issues)?

  Yes – forensic assessment for psycholegal questions; criminal responsibility, malingering, aggressiveness, risk of violent recidivism

- What was your case load (i.e., number of psychotherapy cases and/or the number of assessments a student is expected to get)?

  Negotiable. I found it varied a lot, sometimes high but manageable, sometimes very low, almost with nothing to do.
Supervision

- How many supervisors were involved in your training? **Two**
- How many hours of supervision per week? **One**
- What was the supervision style?
  - Individual vs. group? **Individual**
  - Use of audio-tapes? **No; lots of live, sit-in supervision**

Other Opportunities

- Were research opportunities available for you? **Not really but there could be if you pursued them**
- Were teaching/ didactic opportunities available? **No**
- Did you attend clinical rounds? Professional workshops or colloquia at the site?
  
  **Yes – excellent psychiatry grand rounds at St. Joe’s**
- Were there future opportunities following your practicum such as paid assessment work, research work, and does the site formally train interns?
  
  **I got a referral to do paid CBT work in London, no follow-up at the site though**

Practicum Facility

- How many other trainees were at the site with you? (interns, post-docs, etc.)
  
  **One (my direct supervisor was an intern)**
- What other professionals did you work with? (social workers, psychiatrists, etc.)
  
  **Nurses, social workers, psychiatrists, occupational therapists & assistants, pharmacist, rec therapist, etc.**
- Did you have your own office? **Yes, it was beautiful, nice view**
- Did you have computer access? **Yes, my own**
- Any concerns about accessibility of the site by public transit? **It’s in Hamilton, a ways away from the Go**
- How wheelchair accessible is the site? **Very (it’s a hospital)**
Overall Experience of the Practicum

- Provide a rating on a “five-star” scale of 0 stars (not recommend) to 5 stars (highly recommend) and comment on your overall experience at this practicum.

3.5 – this is a great site for those specifically interested in forensics (which I wasn’t) or in getting lots of basic assessment experience (which I was). The assessment is broad but shallow – lots of screening-type assessment and little in-depth interpretation or integration of test findings. You need to be able to do self-guided work and pursue your own goals, projects and needs. Supervision was a mixed experience – very available and with excellent advice, but was interpersonally a bit shaky at first, maybe due to different expectations and interpersonal styles, nothing terrible.

- What did a typical day look like at the site?

Maybe would see a patient for interview and testing for two hours, team meeting for an hour or two – this is a very collaborative atmosphere – test scoring, report writing and editing with lots of chart review and clerical stuff for the rest of the day.

Other

- What was the perception of psychology as a profession within the site?

Psychology is very valued here as a consulting department. Psychologists provide an independent second opinion on psycholegal questions and the psych testing is highly valued – many nurses and psychiatrists will be very interested in your opinions and contributions. All longer-term patients are seen regularly by psychology here and this is viewed as essential. Psychiatry however “heads” the clinical work on this unit.

- How was conflict resolved at this site? (e.g., what would happen in the event of a problem between supervisor/supervisee).

My (few) conflicts were resolved between my supervisor and I directly. Beyond that I guess I would have gone to the practicum organizer (Sean Isaac).