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Abstract

The aim of this study was to report the learning style preferences of final year Sports Therapy students within the context of clinical education, with a further specific focus on differences between male and female learning styles. A total of $n = 32$ BSc. (Hons) Sports Therapy degree students ($\bar{x} \pm s$; age = 21.8 ± 4.8 years, male:female = 14:18) were recruited from the University of Gloucestershire whilst completing a 24 week clinical practice module. Data collection involved the Kolb learning style inventory (version 3.1) being administered to all participants with reference to their clinical practice experience. Data analysis, involving mean scores for these learning style orientations, were then used to determine the group preference for abstractness over concreteness (AC-CE) and action over reflection (AE-RO). Group analysis revealed a preference for the converging learning style (AC-CE = 5.3, AE-RO = 5.2) and was in contrast to the favoured individual learning styles of Accommodator (34%) and Diverger (31%). These individual findings are consistent with Kolb & Kolb's (2005) belief that individuals involved in human-related professions are person orientated and likely to adopt concrete learning styles. Gender comparison revealed a statistically significant difference between the AC-CE scores ($P = 0.03$), possibly leading to the assumption that male Sports Therapy students have a predilection for more abstract modes of experiential learning (8.6), whereas females have a slight preference for more concrete means (2.7), suggesting a more balanced learning style. The findings of this study indicate that learning activities could be tailored in order to optimise potential learning within a clinical Sports Therapy context.