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A study of occupational therapy in mental health management

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Abstract

Occupational therapy (OT) is a holistic approach to treating individuals with mental health issues that emphasizes participation in daily life activities. In mental health management, OT helps individuals develop the skills needed to perform these activities, which in turn promotes a sense of purpose, self-esteem, and overall mental wellbeing. This paper provides an overview of the role of occupational therapy in mental health management, including its key concepts, principles, and techniques. It also highlights the evidence supporting the efficacy of OT in mental health treatment and the challenges faced by occupational therapists in this field. Finally, the paper discusses the future direction of occupational therapy in mental health management and its potential to improve the quality of life for individuals with mental health issues.

Keywords: Occupational therapy, mental health, COVID-19, advantages

Introduction

Mental health issues are prevalent and can significantly impact an individual's ability to participate in daily life activities. Occupational therapy (OT) is a healthcare profession that focuses on helping individuals engage in meaningful activities, such as work, leisure, and self-care. OT can be a valuable approach in mental health management, as it addresses not only the psychological symptoms of mental health disorders but also the functional difficulties that may arise from these symptoms.

The primary goal of occupational therapy in mental health management is to promote a sense of purpose, meaning, and self-esteem in individuals with mental health disorders. By helping individuals develop the skills and abilities needed to perform daily life activities, occupational therapy can enhance their quality of life and overall mental wellbeing. In this paper, we will explore the key concepts, principles, and techniques of occupational therapy in mental health management, as well as the evidence supporting its effectiveness and the challenges facing occupational therapists in this field.

Need of the Study

The need for studying occupational therapy in mental health management arises from the growing prevalence of mental health disorders worldwide. Mental health issues can significantly impact an individual's ability to engage in daily life activities and can lead to social isolation, decreased self-esteem, and poor quality of life.

Occupational therapy provides a holistic approach to mental health management by addressing not only the psychological symptoms of mental health disorders but also the functional difficulties that may arise from these symptoms. OT interventions can help individuals develop the skills and abilities needed to perform daily life activities, which in turn can enhance their sense of purpose, meaning, and overall mental wellbeing. (Cordingley K, Ryan S, 2009) ^[13].

Studying the role of occupational therapy in mental health management can help healthcare professionals, policymakers, and individuals with mental health disorders understand the value of this approach and its potential to improve outcomes for individuals with mental health issues. It can also highlight the challenges faced by occupational therapists in this field and identify areas for further research and development. Ultimately, studying occupational

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therapy in mental health management can lead to better quality of care and improved quality of life for individuals with mental health disorders.

Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy (OT) is a healthcare profession that focuses on helping individuals to participate in daily life activities, such as work, leisure, and self-care. The primary goal of occupational therapy is to promote health and wellbeing through engagement in meaningful activities.



Fig 1: Occupational therapy

OT interventions are designed to address physical, cognitive, and psychosocial factors that may impact an individual's ability to participate in daily life activities. OT practitioners work with individuals across the lifespan and in various settings, including hospitals, schools, rehabilitation centers, and community organizations. (Arbesman, M, 2011)^[14].

Some examples of OT interventions include

- Teaching individuals with physical disabilities how to use adaptive equipment to perform daily life activities
- Helping children with developmental disabilities to develop social and play skills
- Supporting individuals with mental health issues to develop coping strategies and manage daily life activities
- Assisting older adults with age-related changes in vision, hearing, and mobility to maintain independence in daily life activities.
- Occupational therapy is a client-centered approach that focuses on the individual's goals and priorities. It emphasizes a collaborative approach to treatment, with the individual and therapist working together to develop a personalized intervention plan.
- Occupational therapy plays a crucial role in helping individuals to participate in daily life activities, promoting health and wellbeing, and improving quality of life.

Advantages of Occupational therapy

Occupational therapy has several advantages and benefits for individuals with a wide range of physical, cognitive, and mental health conditions. Some of the advantages of occupational therapy include:

Improved functional outcomes: Occupational therapy interventions can help individuals to improve their ability to perform daily activities and tasks, such as self-care, work, school, and leisure activities. This can lead to increased independence and improved quality of life.

Personalized treatment: Occupational therapy is a client-centered approach that emphasizes the individual's unique needs and goals. Occupational therapists work with individuals to develop personalized treatment plans that are tailored to their specific needs and interests.

Holistic approach: Occupational therapy takes a holistic approach to treatment, considering the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of an individual's well-being. This approach can lead to improved overall health outcomes.

Promotes health and well-being: Occupational therapy interventions can promote health and well-being by helping individuals to engage in meaningful activities that improve their physical and mental health.

Cost-effective: Occupational therapy interventions have been found to be cost-effective in many cases, particularly when compared to other forms of healthcare interventions.

Addresses underlying causes: Occupational therapy interventions can address the underlying causes of a condition, rather than just treating the symptoms. This can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes.

Mental Health Management

Mental health management refers to the care and treatment of individuals with mental health issues, including psychiatric disorders such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. Mental health management involves a range of interventions, including medication, therapy, and lifestyle changes, aimed at improving an individual's mental health and overall quality of life. (Cordingley K, Ryan S, 2009)^[13]



Fig 2: Mental health management

Mental health management typically involves a multidisciplinary team of healthcare professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, and occupational therapists. The team works together to develop a personalized treatment plan that addresses the individual's specific mental health needs and goals.

Some common interventions in mental health management include:

- **Medication:** Prescription medication is often used to manage symptoms of mental health disorders, such as antidepressants, antipsychotics, and mood stabilizers.
- **Therapy:** Talk therapy, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and psychotherapy, is often used to help individuals manage symptoms and develop coping strategies.

- **Lifestyle changes:** Making lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise, a healthy diet, and good sleep hygiene, can help improve mental health and overall wellbeing.
- **Support groups:** Support groups can provide a sense of community and help individuals with mental health issues feel less isolated.

Mental health management is essential for individuals with mental health issues to improve their quality of life, manage symptoms, and achieve their goals. A comprehensive approach that addresses the individual's physical, emotional, and social needs is critical for successful mental health management.

Occupational Therapy in Mental Health during COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on mental health worldwide. Many individuals are experiencing increased stress, anxiety, and depression as a result of the pandemic, and there has been a corresponding increase in demand for mental health services, including occupational therapy.

Occupational therapists have played an important role in supporting individuals with mental health conditions during the pandemic. They have helped individuals to adapt to changes in daily routines, such as working from home and remote learning, and to cope with the stress and uncertainty of the pandemic.

One of the challenges of providing occupational therapy services during the pandemic has been the need for physical distancing and the closure of many in-person therapy settings. However, occupational therapists have adapted by providing telehealth services, which allow individuals to receive therapy from the safety and comfort of their own homes.

Occupational therapists have also played a role in addressing the mental health impacts of the pandemic on healthcare workers, who have been at the forefront of the response to the pandemic. They have provided support and resources to help healthcare workers cope with the stress and trauma of their work.

Occupational therapy has been a valuable approach to supporting individuals with mental health conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. It has helped individuals to adapt to the challenges of the pandemic and to improve their functional outcomes and overall quality of life. However, there is a need for further research and advocacy to ensure that individuals with mental health conditions continue to receive the support and care they need during and after the pandemic.

According to the Indian Association of Occupational Therapists (IAOT), there are approximately 15,000 registered occupational therapists in India as of 2020. However, there is a shortage of qualified occupational therapists, particularly in rural areas, where access to occupational therapy services is limited. (Gutman, S. A., 2021)^[4].

In terms of mental health, the National Mental Health Survey of India found that approximately 14% of the population in India has a mental health condition, with depression and anxiety being the most common. However, there is a significant treatment gap for mental health conditions in India, with many individuals not receiving the care and support they need.

The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for mental health services in India. According to a survey conducted by the Indian Psychiatric Society in 2020, there has been a significant increase in the number of individuals seeking mental health services during the pandemic, with many reporting increased stress, anxiety, and depression.

Occupational therapy has the potential to be a valuable approach to promoting mental health and well-being in India. However, there is a need for further investment in mental health services and increased access to occupational therapy services to ensure that individuals with mental health conditions receive the care and support they need.

Literature Review

Scanlan, J. N., & Still, M. (2013)^[1] A group of occupational therapists who specialize in mental health provide a thorough analysis of the factors associated with job satisfaction, turnover intention, and burnout in this study. Interventions to prevent burnout should be put in place and evaluated to improve the health of the work force and keep more of its members. These strategies should focus on improving job resources such as supervisor support, feedback, and participation in decision making, as well as building the personal resilience of occupational therapists working in mental health. This study used the JD-R framework to examine the work experiences of occupational therapists in a large metropolitan mental health service and how those experiences related to job satisfaction and turnover intention. To learn more about recruitment, retention, and job satisfaction, participants were also asked to describe what they liked and didn't like about their current job and what made them want to work there in the first place.

Wimpeny, K., Savin-Baden, M. *et al.*, (2014)^[2] Introduction The profession of occupational therapy is finding it harder and harder to show what it does and how helpful it is in different practice settings by looking at the perspectives of clients and caregivers. The value of occupational therapy services must be demonstrated to commissioning groups in addition to hearing from clients. If they don't, the profession might lose money to outside providers. As health care moves toward Paying by Results and Cluster/Pathway-based commissioning, this situation is getting worse. The effectiveness of occupational therapy in mental health must therefore be determined. This research paper is the first qualitative research synthesis (QRS) done to determine what kinds of interventions occupational therapists use around the world from the perspectives of clients, caregivers, and occupational therapists, respectively. Gibson, R. W., D'Amico, M. *et al.*, (2011)^[3] The effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions concentrating on recovery in the areas of community integration and normative life roles for people with significant mental illness was examined in this systematic review of the research literature. Interventions targeting performance skills and performance patterns, elements of context and environment, activity demands, and client characteristics were all considered in the review.

Gutman, S. A. (2021)^[4] In order to identify critical areas of mental health research that occupational therapy professionals could contribute to as members of interprofessional mental health inquiry teams, the AOTF funded a Mental Health PGC, which met in 2017. The PGC identified eight potential studies addressing occupational

therapy's contribution to interprofessional research promoting community participation and health outcomes for people with mental illness, along with three broad areas of research inquiry, seven overarching research concepts, and seven sub-areas of inquiry. Measurement, supported employment, and community participation/health and function are three primary areas of research inquiry.

Hitch, D., Pépin, G., *et al.*, (2015) ^[5] Mental health is a significant field of study that is usually thought to be expanding globally. To date, research examining the evidence for mental health occupational therapy has come from peer-reviewed papers in a single journal or has been included indistinguishably in more comprehensive analyses of the evidence for occupational therapy. To determine what already exists and direct future targeted research, an examination of the data that is now available to mental health occupational therapists across a variety of publications is required.

Sánchez-Guarnido, *et al.*, (2021) ^[6] These new forms of care have required occupational therapists to adapt, and there is some evidence that telemedicine in the field of occupational therapy has benefits. The users that receive it are equally pretty delighted with it. Therefore, occupational therapists working in the field of mental health can use telehealth to actively prevent the onset of symptoms and enhance the recovery model, enabling equal access and improved possibilities for all individuals with mental health issues, their families, and their closest social networks.

Lloyd, C., & Lee Williams, P. (2010) ^[7] Occupational therapy was founded on the idea that engaging in meaningful activities is important to an individual's health. It is now widely accepted that the majority of care should be provided in the community setting rather than the inpatient setting, which was once the primary focus of care. Yet, the acute inpatient mental health setting remains an important component of comprehensive mental health care and requires continued expansion to remain relevant. The quality of care provided to service users has improved as a result of the shift in care focus toward treating individuals in their communities. The scope of practice for occupational therapists in the modern adult acute mental health setting: a review of current practice.

Research Methodology

Research the topic: Begin by conducting a comprehensive literature search to gather information about occupational therapy in mental health management. Look for reputable sources, such as academic journals, books, and government publications.

Identify the key concepts: Identify the key concepts related to occupational therapy in mental health management. These may include the role of occupational therapy in mental health treatment, the types of interventions used in occupational therapy for mental health, the benefits of occupational therapy for mental health, and the challenges associated with providing occupational therapy in mental health settings.

Develop research questions: Develop research questions based on the key concepts identified in step two. These questions should guide your research and help you to focus on the most important aspects of the topic. Example research questions might include: What is the role of

occupational therapy in managing mental health conditions? What are the most effective occupational therapy interventions for managing mental health conditions? What are the challenges associated with providing occupational therapy in mental health settings?

Select appropriate research methods: Depending on your research questions, you may choose to use different research methods. For example, you may conduct a systematic review of the literature, a qualitative study to explore the experiences of occupational therapists working in mental health, or a quantitative study to measure the effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions for mental health.

Discussion

Occupational therapy in mental health management is an approach that recognizes the importance of occupation and activity in promoting mental health and well-being. The goal of occupational therapy in mental health management is to help individuals with mental health conditions to engage in meaningful activities and improve their functional outcomes and overall quality of life.

One of the key benefits of occupational therapy in mental health management is its focus on the individual's unique needs and interests. Occupational therapists work with individuals to identify activities that are meaningful and enjoyable for them and to develop personalized treatment plans to help them achieve their goals.

Another benefit of occupational therapy in mental health management is its focus on functional outcomes. Occupational therapists work with individuals to improve their ability to perform daily activities, such as work, school, and leisure activities, which can lead to increased independence and improved mental health outcomes.

Despite the potential benefits of occupational therapy in mental health management, there are also some challenges associated with providing these services. One of the main challenges is the shortage of qualified occupational therapists in many parts of the world, including India. Additionally, there may be a lack of awareness among mental health professionals about the role of occupational therapy in mental health management, which can limit access to these services for individuals who could benefit from them.

Occupational therapy in mental health management is a valuable approach to promoting mental health and well-being. Further research and advocacy are needed to improve access to these services and to ensure that individuals with mental health conditions receive the support and care they need to achieve their goals and lead fulfilling lives.

Challenges

Occupational therapy can be a highly effective treatment for a wide range of mental health challenges, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and bipolar disorder, among others. Here are some ways in which occupational therapy can be used to address mental health challenges:

Self-care: Occupational therapy can help individuals to develop self-care skills, such as managing daily routines, nutrition, sleep hygiene, and personal hygiene, which can improve their overall mental health and well-being.

Meaningful activities: Occupational therapy can help individuals to engage in meaningful activities that promote a sense of purpose and fulfillment. These activities can include hobbies, volunteering, work, or leisure activities, among others.

Social skills: Occupational therapy can help individuals to develop social skills and build social support networks, which can improve their mental health and well-being.

Stress management: Occupational therapy can help individuals to develop coping strategies and stress management techniques, such as relaxation techniques, mindfulness, and breathing exercises, which can help to reduce anxiety and stress levels.

Cognitive and behavioral interventions: Occupational therapy can incorporate cognitive and behavioral interventions, such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), to address negative thinking patterns and promote positive behaviors.

Occupational therapy can be a valuable approach to addressing mental health challenges, by focusing on improving functional outcomes, promoting positive self-image, and providing coping strategies and stress management techniques. It emphasizes the individual's unique needs and goals and can lead to improved overall quality of life.

Conclusion

Occupational therapy is a valuable approach in mental health management that can help individuals with mental health issues to engage in daily life activities, promote their sense of purpose and meaning, and enhance their overall mental wellbeing. OT interventions are designed to address both the psychological symptoms of mental health disorders and the functional difficulties that may arise from these symptoms.

The evidence supporting the efficacy of occupational therapy in mental health treatment is growing, but there are also challenges facing occupational therapists in this field. These include limited resources, stigma, and the need for ongoing professional development and training.

Future directions for occupational therapy in mental health management include increasing awareness of its value and promoting its integration into mental health treatment plans. Research is also needed to identify the most effective OT interventions for specific mental health disorders and to evaluate their long-term outcomes.

Overall, occupational therapy has the potential to significantly improve the quality of life for individuals with mental health issues and should be considered an essential component of mental health treatment.

Future Work

There are several areas for future work in occupational therapy in mental health management:

Further research on the effectiveness of specific occupational therapy interventions for different mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and schizophrenia.

Development of new and innovative approaches to occupational therapy in mental health management, such as the use of technology to enhance the delivery of therapy.

Integration of occupational therapy into multidisciplinary mental health treatment teams to improve coordination and communication between healthcare professionals.

Greater focus on prevention and early intervention for mental health disorders, including the role of occupational therapy in promoting mental wellness and resilience.

Continued professional development and training for occupational therapists working in mental health management to ensure they are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills to provide effective and evidence-based interventions.

Advocacy efforts to increase awareness of the value of occupational therapy in mental health management among policymakers, healthcare professionals, and the general public.

The future of occupational therapy in mental health management is promising, and there is a growing recognition of its potential to improve outcomes for individuals with mental health disorders. Ongoing research, development, and advocacy efforts will be essential to ensure that occupational therapy continues to play an important role in mental health treatment.

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