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Lauren Hackl
A. T. Still University

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Impact of the Level of Parental Involvement in Occupational Therapy Services on Patient Outcomes for Children Ages 0-3 in the Outpatient Setting

Lauren Hackl, OTS

Advisors: M. Abbey Glenn OTD, OTR/L, CBIS & Rebecca L. Wolf JD, MPH, OTR/L

Introduction

- Early intervention services assist children from birth-3 years of age with developmental delays or disabilities (CDC, 2019).
- Occupational therapists play a key role in early intervention by providing client-centered, occupation-based services and supports to children and their families (AOTA, 2014).
- Increased parent involvement can promote cognitive ability, language ability, movement ability, social competence, and self-care ability (Hanna & Rodger, 2002).
- Parent involvement is associated with significant gains in sensory integrative and cognitive function as well as adaptive behavior (Hamill, 1987).
- When parents implement therapist recommendations in the home, it is shown to lead to improvements in children's behavior problems, functional communication, flexibility and adaptability, parent-child relationships, and overall family harmony and well-being in everyday life (Clancy, 2017).

Research Question & Hypothesis

Research Question: Is level of parental involvement in occupational therapy services correlated with changes in patient outcomes for children ages 0-3 in the outpatient setting?

Hypothesis: Higher levels of parental involvement in occupational therapy services will promote increased changes in patient outcomes for children ages 0-3 in the outpatient setting.

Methods

- Mixed methods
- Quantitative data: Peabody Developmental Motor Scales Second Edition (PDMS-2) scores and parent surveys (Folio & Fewell, 2000)
- Qualitative data: treatment session observations and therapist survey responses
- N = 20

Timeline:

- Week 1: Distributed therapist surveys
- Weeks 2-7: Distributed first parent survey and obtained PDMS-2 scores from initial evaluation
- Weeks 10-12: Distributed second parent survey and obtained PDMS-2 scores from most recent progress report
- Weeks 1-14: Observed treatment sessions with parent present and absent

Participants:

Inclusion Criteria:

- Parents of children, 0 to 3 years of age at the start of the project who receive early intervention services in an outpatient setting.

Exclusion Criteria:

- People who are not parents of children, 0 to 3 years of age at the start of the project and who do not receive early intervention services in an outpatient setting.

Results

Impact of Parental involvement on Patient Outcomes:

- Number of parents with low involvement: 0
- Number of parents with medium involvement: 8
- Number of parents with high involvement: 12
- Difference in PDMS-2 score improvement between high and medium involvement: 4.7
- Difference between scores was not significant (p = 0.696)

Impacts of Parental Presence During Treatment Sessions:

- Observed treatment sessions for 4 participants with and without parent present
- Measured number of verbal cues required for redirection and activities completed
- 50% of participants responded negatively
- 50% of participants showed no difference in behaviors

	With Parent		Without Parent		Comments	Parent Survey Score
	Verbal Cues	Activities Completed	Verbal Cues	Activities Completed		
Participant 1	15	2/4	9	3/4	Attachment to parent, distress due to parent intervening in session and environmental sounds	25
Participant 8	7	5/6	4	5/5	Attachment to parent, increased encouragement required to participate in presented activities	21.5
Participant 11	7	4/4	5	3/3	No significant changes in behavior observed	24.5
Participant 17	5	5/5	4	6/6	No significant changes in behavior observed	27

Occupational Therapists' Perspective on Parental Involvement:

- Number of therapist survey responses = 8
- 5 themes identified related to issues with early intervention services in the outpatient setting

Themes	Number of Responses	Quotes
Increase Outreach/Clients/Diagnostic Testing	2	"Increasing outreach – targeting more clients..." "Increased availability of developmental pediatricians for diagnostic testing."
Schedule Changes	2	"Also, I would make it so younger kids could have on going slots later in the day for working parents." "From an OT perspective at times the duration of treatment sessions."
Parental Involvement/Engagement/Education	4	"...increasing education for parents." "Parent involvement/hands on training for handling to ensure correct handling..." "Increasing engagement with parents who don't follow through no matter how information is presented – hard to assign tasks at times when parents don't share what is available at home." "More collaboration between parents..."
Interdisciplinary Collaboration	2	"I would change having more co treats with kiddos under 1..." "...[more collaboration between] disciplines if the child receives OT at one location and PT at another."
Equipment Availability/Setup in Home Environment	2	"Easier access to resources to be used within homes (equipment for more medically complex kiddos)." "...[training to ensure correct] set up of [home] environment."

Discussion

- Children with highly involved parents improved slightly more in their occupational therapy services than children with parents in the medium involvement category.
- Lack of honesty on the parent involvement survey could have contributed to the statistical insignificance of data.
- There was limited evidence demonstrating benefits of parental presence during treatment sessions, which could have been affected by the recruitment process.
- Parental involvement was the most common response when occupational therapists were asked what they would change about early intervention services in the outpatient setting

Limitations:

- Small sample size
- Unable to control confounding factors
- Different occupational therapists treated during session observations
- Parent involvement was measured with a self-report tool

Recommendations for Research:

- Larger sample size
- Conduct research across different therapy settings, age groups, and geographic areas
- Consider child's diagnosis and demographics

Implications for OT Practice:

- Understand the importance of involving parents in the evaluation and treatment process of a child's occupational therapy services
- Understand OT's role in educating parents on occupational therapy skills and the benefits of completing home program activities outside of the clinic

Conclusion

- This project attempted to examine the relationship between parent involvement in OT services and patient outcomes.
- Parent involvement is especially important in early intervention services due to the high degree of plasticity and potential to improve in OT services that are seen in children ages 0-3.
- Occupational therapists should emphasize the importance of involving parents in the therapy process and completing OT activities at home.

References

See citations list.