



Quantitative

Improving cognition and vocational outcomes for people with mental health conditions

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Introduction

WISE Ways to Work assists people living with mental illness achieve their vocational goals by providing skills-development programs and employment support. Cognitive impairments contribute to difficulty obtaining/maintaining employment for people with mental illness. The presentation will describe the evaluation of Employ Your Mind (EYM), a program that integrates cognitive remediation (CR) with vocational rehabilitation.

Objectives

- 1) To present findings of the Employ Your Mind evaluation (doi: 10.1007/s40737-021-00225-9)
- 2) Attendees to learn about CR and the value of integrating CR into vocational rehabilitation programs.
- 3) Attendees to gain understanding of the emerging area of CR for OTs, particularly given the emphasis on functional outcomes

Method

Participants completed the six-month EYM program at WISE Ways to Work. Assessments of psychosocial functioning, cognition and vocational data were collected at baseline and completion, and additional vocational outcomes were collected at 12-month follow-up.

Results

Thirty-two participants commenced EYM with 65.6% completing. Significant improvements included increased mental wellbeing, quality of life, and enhanced perception of their working ability. Participants demonstrated significantly enhanced speed of processing, with medium to large effects in processing speed, verbal learning, working memory, problem solving and social cognition. Of the fifteen participants who reported vocational outcomes, 26.6% were engaged in competitive paid employment in the year prior to EYM commencement and 53.3% in the year following.

Conclusion

The results indicate that EYM assists cognitive performance, psychosocial outcomes, and work readiness in people with mental illness. Occupational Therapists are well positioned to provide cognitive remediation, with an emphasis on improving functional outcomes.



Qualitative

Supporting self-determination allows the consumer to take the 'driver's seat' in their own recovery: The perspective of occupational therapists

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Introduction/Rationale

Self-determination is a core component of mental health recovery and a predictor of positive consumer outcomes. The literature calls for occupational therapists to lead practice change to greater recovery-orientation, including facilitating self-determination. However, systemic challenges thwart translation of policy into practice and therapists report a lack of confidence in how to implement these principles.

Objectives

This study aims to shed light on experiences and practices that support self-determination from the perspectives of mental health occupational therapists self-identifying as recovery-oriented practitioners.

Method/Approach

Data are currently being collected through an on-line questionnaire principally comprising three open-ended questions to elicit deep reflective personal accounts. Qualitative data are being inductively analysed thematically, using constant comparative methods. Frequency calculations in the second analysis stage will provide further insights into practices more frequently used by therapists in particular practice contexts. To date, 17 therapists have participated, and we anticipate at least 50 additional submissions before ending data collection and analysis in October.

Results/Practice Implications

Therapists identified a diverse range of intentional practices they employ to support self-determination including for example: holding hope for the consumer; positive risk-taking; and creating opportunities for consumers to self-advocate and embrace leadership roles. In addition, therapists describe contextual enablers and barriers to supporting consumer self-determination. The full findings will be presented and implications for practice discussed.

Conclusion

Therapists described rich and diverse strategies employed to empower consumers to take the 'driver's seat' in their recovery journey. These insights will support other therapists to enhance their own recovery-oriented practice.



Mixed Methods

Implementing and evaluating occupational formulation in a forensic mental health service

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Introduction

Occupational therapists can struggle with linking occupational therapy theory to practice, demonstrating an occupational focus and confidently articulating their therapeutic reasoning. Occupational formulation is a theory-based approach for synthesising assessment information to describe a client's occupational situation and may offer a bridge between theory, assessment and intervention planning. Often drawn into generic ways of working, many mental health occupational therapists are embracing the approach to provide a unique occupational perspective.

Objectives

This study aims to strengthen the occupational therapy practice process and embed a structured approach to occupational formulation and goal setting within a forensic mental health occupational therapy service; and to evaluate the impact of using this approach to occupational formulation and goal setting from the perspectives of occupational therapists and consumers.

Method

A participatory action research (PAR) approach was selected to support the implementation and evaluation of this approach. The longitudinal, mixed methods evaluation includes surveys, training records, documentation review and qualitative data gathering from occupational therapists and consumers.

Results

Evaluation and analysis are ongoing: therapists demonstrate increased collaboration with clients and deeper understanding of underlying occupational therapy theory. Occupational formulations are supporting consistent care as clients transition between units; feedback from clients and multi-disciplinary colleagues indicates the person-focus and contribution to team plans are appreciated. Other aspects of the practice process have been strengthened, including assessment and documentation.

Conclusion

A structured, occupation-focused approach to formulation is strengthening the practice process within an occupational therapy team, bringing a more collaborative and occupation-focused approach to therapy.



Literature Review

An evidence based approach to supporting young people experiencing psychosis with employment

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Introduction/Rationale

Most young people finish school and plan to do some kind of study/training or work. Young people who experience psychosis are no different, yet they are much less likely to find work or start study. This disruption often gets in the way of gaining early work experiences, which can prevent young people experiencing psychosis from getting into the workforce and establishing their future careers.

Objectives

To review current literature (evidence) and investigate current practice of occupational therapists who support young people experiencing psychosis with employment. To review and generate evidence to support the professional reasoning and effective practice of occupational therapists.

Method/Approach

A structured review of the literature was conducted to determine what is currently known about young people experiencing psychosis and work. As this review identified a lack of evidence to guide professional reasoning and evidence based practice, a survey of current practice will be conducted.

Results/Practice Implications

The evidence on what works to support young people with psychosis to find and keep work is limited. While there is evidence that Individual Placement and Support (IPS) can help young people experiencing psychosis find work, evidence also shows that in Australia, most people with psychotic disorders who are employed found work on their own or through personal networks. Evidence to guide occupational therapists to help people keep jobs or return to work is lacking.

Conclusion

Uncovering and sharing current practice in the field will help to generate knowledge for practice where evidence from the research literature is lacking.