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Assessing the Impact of Online Occupational Therapy Content on Professional Development for Occupational Therapists

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BACKGROUND

Social media has provided a virtual space for occupational therapists around the world to connect and to share practical information and this type of media has great potential as a source of social support and mentorship.

Occupational therapists have established their online presence since the early 2000s with social media outlets like podcasting, blogging, and participating in Facebook groups and forums. Many individuals have started producing podcasts in the past five years as a part time endeavor due to low-cost entry (Forbes, 2019). Occupational therapists have also followed this trend to create OT-based knowledge podcasts for other occupational therapists and health professionals (OTpodcasts.com, n.d.). These podcasts follow the format of a radio talk show and provide outlets for education online while interacting with the online community they serve.

PROBLEM

There is a gap in the literature regarding the effects of consuming occupational therapy-based knowledge from podcasts and other forms of social media. Several studies exist examining the use of podcasts for continuing education among other professions (Singer, 2019; Balls-Berry et al., 2018). There are potential positive and negative impacts of professional use of social media which need to be explored for the profession of occupational therapy.

PURPOSE

Outcome Objectives

1. Explore current types of OT-based content in blogs and podcasts and evaluate the quality of OT-related information available online.
2. Identify barriers and supports to consumers of occupational therapy-based content online.
3. Learn qualitative methods and complete qualitative study to assess the perceived impact of OT-based content from occupational therapists and occupational therapy students.
4. Interview individuals who currently produce content for OT based podcasts to assess potential strengths and barriers of virtual environment.
5. Present guide with ways effectively engage in OT based social media content and to critically appraise sources of information.

METHOD

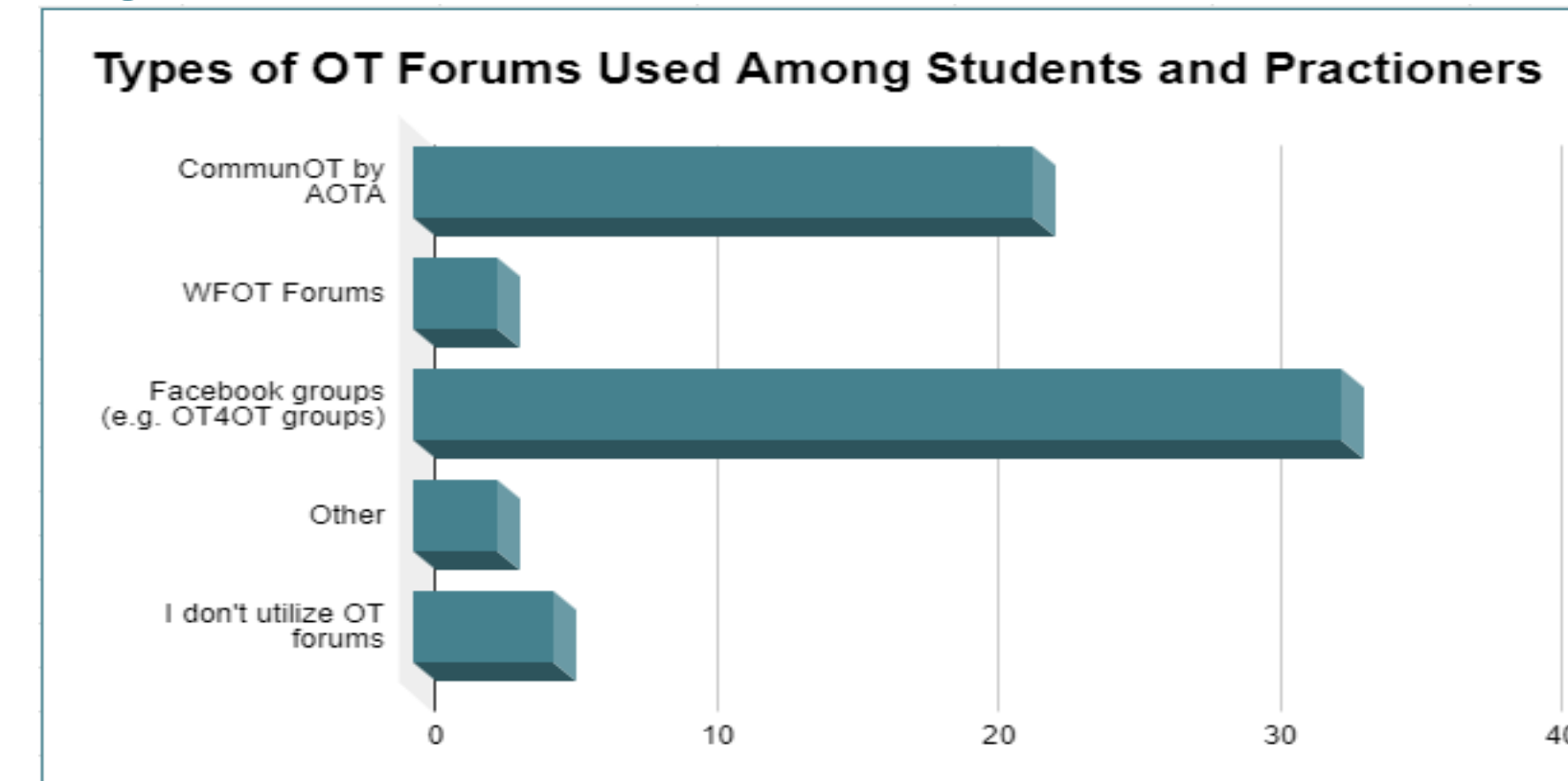
First Four Follow-up Interview Questions

1. How do you define professional development?
2. How do you appraise online OT-based content?
3. What factors impact your decision on choosing what podcasts or blogs to spend time on?
4. How do you feel your engagement in online OT-based content has impacted you overall?

- Data was collected and compiled from the currently available blogs and podcasts with OT-based content over the course of 12 weeks.
- Surveys were conducted among 40 occupational therapy students and occupational therapy practitioners. 10 individuals opted in the follow-up interview.
- Five occupational therapy content creators were interviewed.

RESULTS AND THEMES

Figure 2.

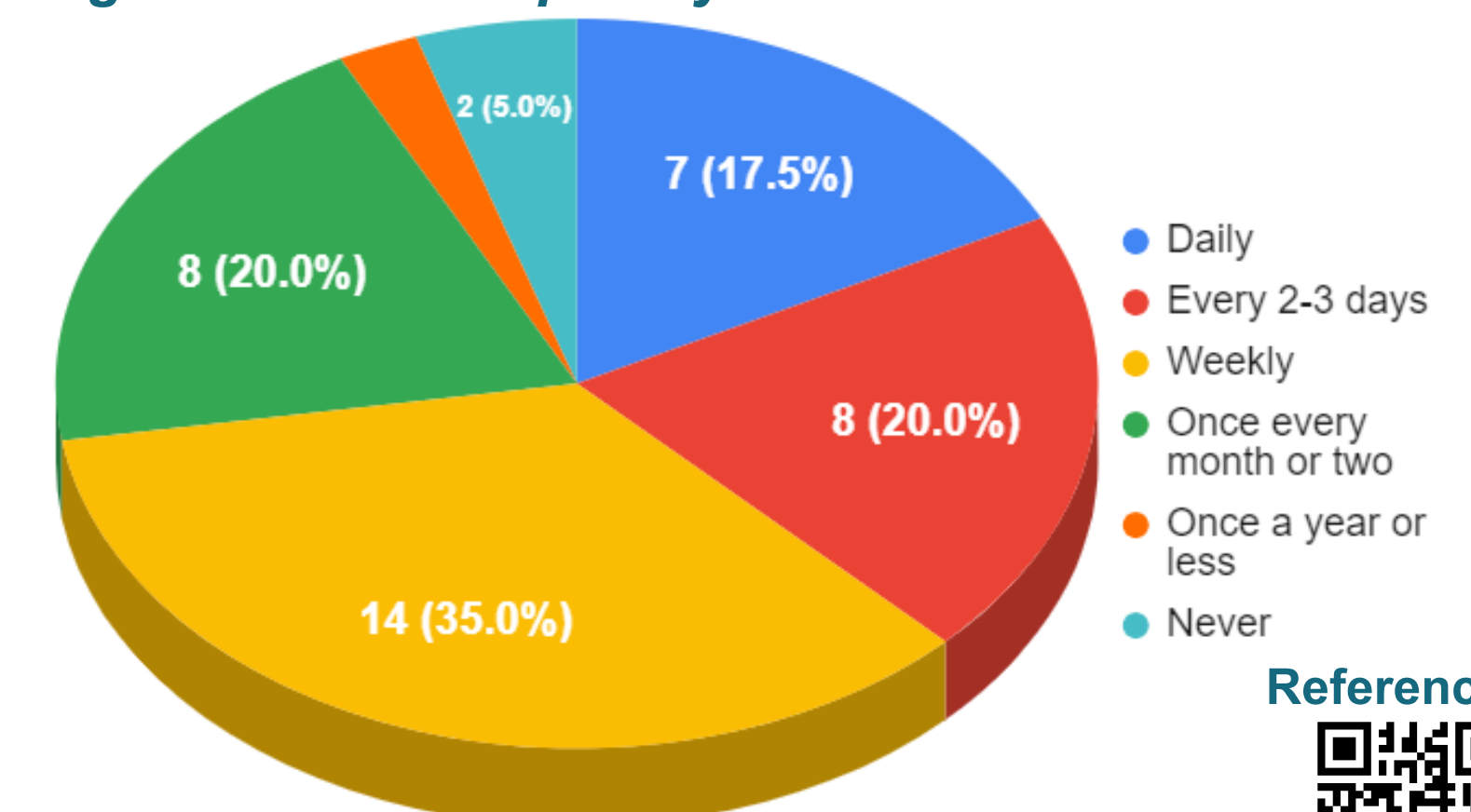


"I like to look online for new ideas, but I take it with a grain of salt because we have to be evidence-based in how we go about our interventions and treatments with our patients."

"When I hear a lot of people recommending one blog or podcast, it really influences me to go check it out for myself."

"My engagement with online content, especially during COVID, has allowed me to remain more in tune with the community."

Figure 1. Use Frequency of Online OT Content



Word of Mouth

- Podcasts and blogs that were recommended by a trusted source were more likely to garner attention.

Reputable Information

- OTs valued podcasts and blogs more when there was a balance of evidence-based content and expert clinical experience.

Sense of Community

- Engagement with online OT based content keeps the individual professionally motivated.

References

