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Claudia Ritchey
c.ritchey@usa.edu

Steven M. Gerardi
University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, sgerardi@usa.edu

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The Role of OT with Individuals Living with Eating Disorders: A Scoping Review

Claudia Ritchey, Steven M. Gerardi, PhD, OTD, MSS, OTR

BACKGROUND

Eating disorders (ED) are chronic mental and physical illnesses that can affect anyone regardless of age, race, gender, and/or other personal factors. The etiology of ED is complex. Research shows contributions from genetic, environmental/social, behavioral (temperament), and other factors. ED are known to affect an individual globally, thus negatively impacting their occupational engagement and performance in daily activities. Occupational therapists treat individuals with ED but the evidence to support occupational therapy (OT) intervention within this population is variable and sparse.

PROBLEM

There is a range of OT interventions described in the OT literature to address the needs of clients with ED, but the literature had not been systematically reviewed or reported in an organized way to inform OT practice, making it difficult for OT practitioners to apply the available literature to clinical practice.

PURPOSE

To conduct a scoping review of the literature to define the role of OT in the treatment of clients with ED.

METHODS

This study employed a 5-stage process, originally described by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and expanded upon by Peters et al. (2020).

The following steps were utilized to conduct the scoping review:

- Identify the research question:**
What are the behaviors engaged in by OT practitioners that define the role of OT in the treatment of clients with ED?
- Identify relevant studies:** Employed EBSCOhost search engine to search the following electronic databases: CINAHL Complete, Medline, APA PsychInfo, and OpenDissertations. **Search terms:** OT, ED.
- Select studies:** Inclusion criteria: (a) addresses OT process (evaluation, assessment, problem identification, goal setting, and/or intervention); (b) intervention must be for clients with ED; (c) must be published in the English Language; (d) must have been published between the years 2000-2021; (e) must be available in full text. Exclusion criteria: Absence of the inclusion criteria. **58 articles identified, 11 included in the study.**
- Chart the data:** To prepare for an analysis of themes and a numerical summary to evaluate and chart the data (Peters et al., 2020), a summary table was used to record themes and chart characteristics of the literature based on an outline of the scoping review results to the research question pertaining to the behaviors of OT practitioners in the treatment of ED
- Collate, summarize and report results**

RESULTS

REPORTED OT DOMAIN AND PROCESS COMPONENTS

Theoretical Framework:

- The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO)

Evaluation:

- Open-ended questions to assess the individual's:
 - Strengths and barriers
 - Self-efficacy
- Specific questions tailored to the individual's:
 - Functionality in activities, roles, habits, routines
 - Implementation of change
 - Ability to plan and structure time

Assessment Tools:

- The Role Checklist
- Weight
- The Eating and Meal Preparation
- Skills Assessment
- Beck's Anxiety Interview
- Subjective Units of Distress Scale

Goal Setting:

- Collaborative, client-centered
- Ethical responsibility

Interventions:

- Meal planning, preparation, and eating: meal cookery groups, outings to restaurants
- Shopping: Groceries and clothes
- Dressing: Clothing and body image
- Play: Use of humor, games, dancing, toys, etc.
- Leisure: going to the movies, etc.
- Self-Regulation: Individual sensory needs, weighted blankets
- Education and Training: Portion sizing, nutrition, coping skill development, appropriate eating behaviors

Intervention Type (OTPF-4 Occupations)	Frequency (n=)	Percent (%)
Meal planning, preparation, and eating	5	26.3%
Shopping	2	10.5%
Dressing	1	5.3%
Play	1	5.3%
Leisure	3	15.8%
Self-Regulation	1	5.3%
Education and training	6	31.5%
	19 total	100

