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OT's Role in Facilitating Successful Role Transition For Informal Caregivers of Dementia

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BACKGROUND

Caregiver stress is persistent with dementia care and is twice as likely to contribute to financial, emotional, and physical problems compared to other caregivers (Palumbo et al., 2020). Although there are many resources that provide support for coping with this life transition, there are few that provide opportunities for real-time training on complex care skills (Prado et al., 2022). Learning caregiving skills under the guidance of experienced professionals not only improves the quality of patient care but can also reduce the incidence of preventable injuries (DiZazzo-Miller, 2014).

PROBLEM

Lack of health literacy and access to support impact caregiving skills and increase stress, resulting in a diminished QOL for the caregiver and their loved one.

PURPOSE

To develop a hands-on, educational workshop to train family caregivers on caring for their loved one with dementia in the home to improve role competency and occupational participation.

Outcome objectives:

- Increase insight on the impact of caregiving for family caregivers of people living with dementia
- Gain experience managing dementia-related behaviors and practicing effective communication
- Identify caregiver education and training needs
- Create an educational workshop based on identified needs
- Increase awareness of occupational therapy's role in dementia care and training

METHODS

- 50 invited
- 13 respondents to Pre-survey
- 6 respondents to Post-survey
- Mixed methods approach
- **Pre-survey:** Participants identified education and training needs based on potential program components drawn from the literature (Edwards, 2015), discussed their individual experiences with the health care system and transition into the caregiver role, and ranked current perception of caregiving abilities on a 5-point Likert scale.
- **Post-survey:** Participants ranked competency in caregiving role before and after program on a 5-point Likert scale, selected activities that were most beneficial to their individual goals, and provided feedback on program experience.

Topics covered:

1. Dementia diagnosis and process;
2. Effective communication & behavior management strategies;
3. Strategies and assistive technology for improving ADL participation;
4. Home modifications;
5. Fall prevention and safety;
6. Strategies for recognizing signs of and treating stress & burnout;
7. Stage appropriate activities to support function and promote engagement

PROGRAM

TREATMENT TEMPLATE COMPONENTS

General Program Goals:

1. Increase participant understanding of dementia disease diagnosis and process
2. Improve confidence in care provision and role competency
3. Provide effective and sustainable educational resources and skills training
4. Promote engagement in occupations that support valued life roles
5. Decrease rates of caregiver stress and burnout to promote decrease in institutionalization and elder abuse/neglect

Activities/Training Methods:

1. Reflection/Journaling
2. Simulations and scenarios
3. Case studies
4. Educational PowerPoints
5. Handouts
6. Activities to identify and problem solve safety risks
7. Demonstration of safe transfers and body mechanics
8. Mindfulness techniques
9. Reminiscence/Memory book

Theoretical Frameworks:

1. The Occupational Adaptation Model/Theory (OA)

*This project involves human subjects but has not been reviewed by the IRB.

Conclusions / Future Directions

Future studies should:

1. Implement the workshop in person to assess the impact of peer engagement, live access to support, and structured participation in all activities on program outcomes.
2. Establish a consistent group of participants with <1 year experience with the diagnosis to assess true impact on knowledge and skill building.
3. Include various healthcare professionals to expand scope of knowledge, information, and resources.
4. Follow up with participants after a span of time to determine long-term effectiveness on role confidence and skill acquisition.

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