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Enhancing Awareness of Aquatic-Based Occupational Therapy Services Across the Lifespan

Jaime Stacy

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Jaime Stacy

Abstract

Title: Enhancing Awareness of Aquatic-Based Occupational Therapy Services Across the Lifespan

Background: Occupational Therapists (OTs) possess the expertise to address diverse conditions within various environments, including aquatic settings. Aquatic Therapy in OT harnesses water's unique properties, leveraging hydrodynamics principles like buoyancy, resistance, and hydrostatic pressure (Mortimer et al., 2014). Water's attributes can improve balance, coordination, strength, and proprioception without land-induced impact (Iliescu, 2020). Despite growing research, aquatic interventions for adults remain underutilized in OT (Carroll et al., 2022). Literature showcases aquatic therapy's effectiveness for neurological conditions, orthopedic injuries, and balance issues (Curcio, 2020). Studies suggest that OTs may lack exposure to aquatic therapy (Saloko et al., 2017).

Purpose: This project aimed to elevate awareness of aquatic-based OT services by: 1) crafting educational resources and hosting workshops for clinicians and students, 2) gauging satisfaction and knowledge among participants, and 3) assessing the educational resources' impact on aquatic therapy program quality.

Methods: Considered a Quality Improvement (QI) project by MUSC IRB, this doctoral capstone involved an Intro to Aquatic Therapy Lecture and Lab for clinicians and students, aquatic boot camp classes for cancer survivors, and a case report for an individual with SCI. Data, collected via pre/post-knowledge tests, satisfaction surveys, and RedCAP queries, included qualitative and quantitative measures.

Results: Analysis revealed heightened confidence, satisfaction and awareness of aquatic therapy among clinicians and students, alongside enhanced quality of life for boot camp and 1:1 session participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and content analyses.

Conclusions: This Doctoral Capstone enhanced the awareness of aquatic-based occupational therapy services. The project showcased the efficacy of educational resources for clinicians and students. Future endeavors could focus on continuing education, advocacy, and investigating long-term patient outcomes and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Resources

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