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A Manualized Occupational Therapy Communication Skills Intervention for Veterans With Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

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BACKGROUND

- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can occur following exposure to a traumatic event.
- The current and lifetime prevalence of PTSD is 4% and 8%, respectively (U.S. Department of Affairs, 2023. p.4)
- PTSD can affect a person's physical, social, and mental well-being and results in impaired social or occupational function (American Psychiatric Association, 2023).
- Because of the occupational disfunction associated with PTSD, occupational therapy (OT) has played a role in rehabilitation (Edgelow et al., 2019).
- *Life skills* training has been identified as a component that should be included in a manualized OT intervention for veterans with PTSD (Gerardi, 2017).
- *Communication skills* (E.g. listening, reflecting, identifying, and expressing) is a life skill that consists of the effective transmission of verbal and non-verbal information (Mata et al., 2021).
- Evidence supports communication skills development as treatment for people with PTSD (Fredman et al., 2017).

PROBLEM

Life-skills training, such as communication skills training, has been identified as a component that should be included in a manualized OT intervention for people with PTSD, but no intervention module has yet been created to address this need.

PURPOSE

To create a manualized OT communication skills intervention module to be included in a comprehensive manualized OT intervention for veterans with PTSD.

METHODS

Theoretical Framework

The model of human occupation (MOHO) was used to guide the development of the manual:

1. Pre-Development phase

- Review of the literature on PTSD, communication skills, veterans, and OT practice.
- Creation of a development plan for the manual
- Defense of the project proposal.

2. Development Phase

- Writing the manual
- Submitting sessions for revision and feedback

3. Review and Revision Phase

- Critical feedback from reviewer
- Resubmit sessions for final review
- Complete final sessions

4. Finalization

- Finalized manual
- Published *OT Practice* magazine
- Poster presentation.

MANUAL COMPONENTS

Introduction for Occupational Therapy Practitioners

- PTSD Background
- Communication Skills Background
- MOHO as Theoretical Foundation
- Session Overviews

Session 1: Understanding PTSD and Communication Skills

- Role of OT
- Impact of Post-traumatic Stress on Occupations
- Defining Communication Skills
- Homework

Session 2: Self: Disclosure

- Introduction to Self-Disclosure
- Activity: Empty Chair
- Homework: 5-5-5

Session 3: Verbal/ Non-Verbal Communication

- Introduction to Verbal/ Non-Verbal Communication
- Tips for Verbal/ Non-Verbal Communication
- Activity: Passive, Aggressive, Assertive Communication
- Homework: Reflection Log

Session 4: Occupation and Habits Using Effective Communication Skills

- Introduction to Occupation and Habits Using Effective Communication Skills
- Activity: Self-Management
- Activity: Social Participation
- Homework

[Link to the Manual](#)



DISCUSSION

Impact

- Will help fill the gap in literature
- Address the development of communication skills as an intervention for people with PTSD
- Improve goals that are client-centered

Limitations

- Lack of literature that supports the efficacy of communication skills as an OT intervention
- Only 4 initial sessions

Next Steps

- Seek out feedback from OTP
- Workshop to educate OTP on manual use
- Future studies to validate the manual

REFERENCES

