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An Exploration of Pediatric Occupational Therapist's Perspectives on Functional and Assistive Mobility

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An Exploration of Pediatric Occupational Therapist's Perspectives of Functional and Assistive Mobility

Jennifer Allison OTS and Amy Lyons-Brown MS, OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

- Early independent functional mobility can positively affect the development of psychological, social, and physical functions (Anderson et al., 2013).
- Assistive mobility devices support development and enhance play and social participation in children with limited mobility (Arps, et al., 2021; Bradbury, et al., 2021; Livingstone, et al., 2022).
- OTs have an important role in addressing the ability to engage in occupations and developmental needs associated with occupational participation.
- Research is limited on pediatric OTs' perceptions of their role in functional mobility and assistive mobility and whether or not they are incorporating these skills into practice

PURPOSE

- To explore pediatric OTs' current roles and perceptions of functional mobility and the implementation and use of assistive mobility devices.

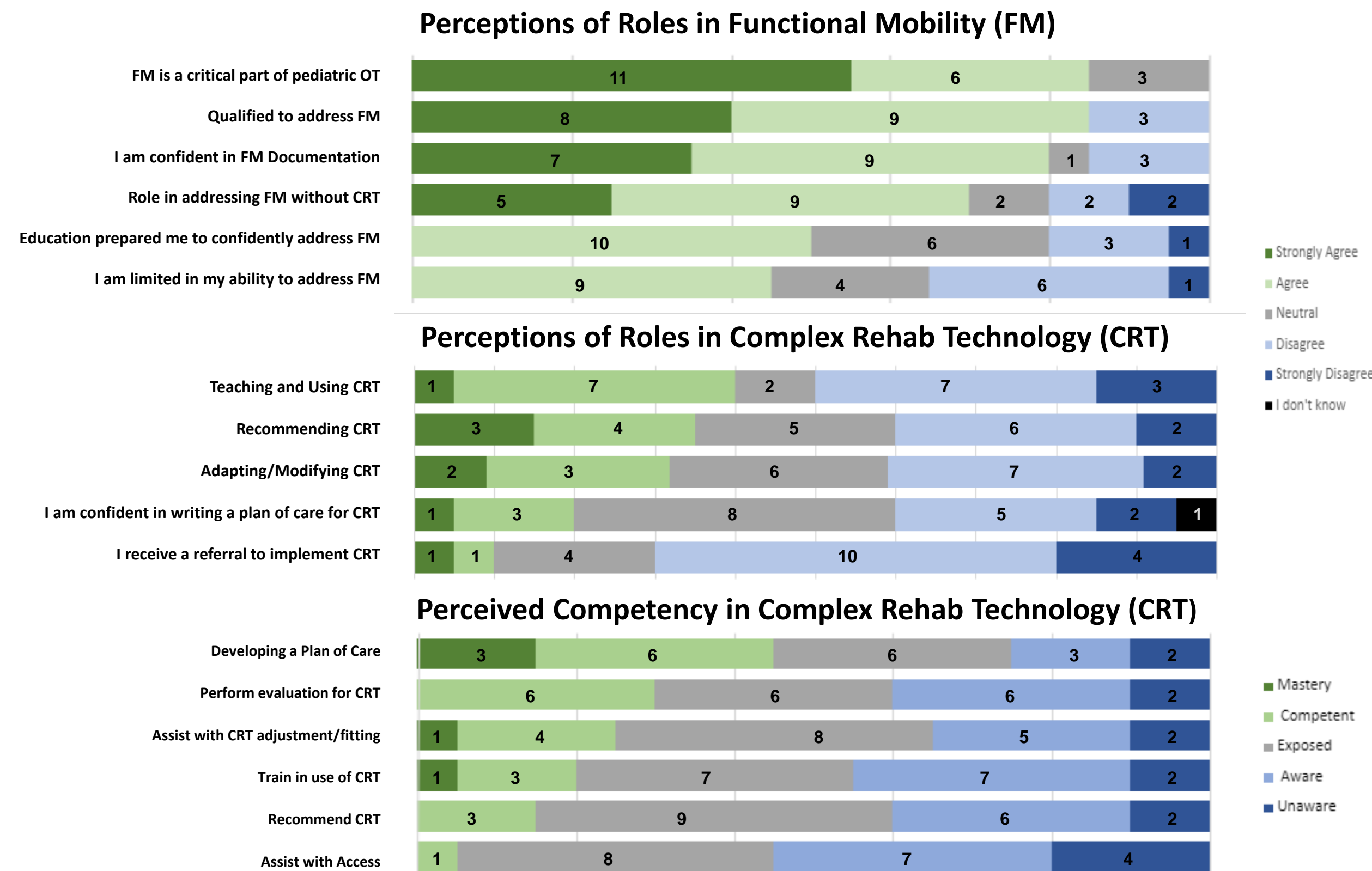
METHODS

- Exploratory study using a mixed-method research design.
- Online survey sent to licensed occupational therapists working in pediatric settings in California (N=20) and an option follow-up interview (N-4).
- Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyze and summarize trends and differences in the data.

This study involves human subjects; it has been reviewed by the IRB and deemed exempt from IRB approval. IRB Number: 23-1205-302

RESULTS

RESEARCH QUESTION: *How do pediatric occupational therapists perceive their role in functional mobility and the implementation and use of assistive mobility devices?*



Functional Mobility: a Means to an End

“Functional mobility is the ability of anybody to access their ADLs throughout the day, so they are able to access their environment no matter how and when they use any adaptive equipment.”

Disconnect Between Perception and Practice

“There is so much to work on in early intervention specifically. And obviously, movement is a building block of all those things. But sometimes I think we do not really take a look at how they are moving...sometimes, you know, when we are assessing the kid we are not, at least I do not feel as confident in my own ability to support them in that way. I feel like my tendency is, let me outsource.”

Blurred Lines in Scope of Practice

“In my experience, this area has fallen under the umbrella of PT, because they always seemed to have more of a background and increased awareness of this area of practice. I do believe there is a role for OT in terms of functional mobility to support meaningful participation in occupations.”

DISCUSSION

- Pediatric OTs perceive functional mobility as part of their role. However, it was perceived that PTs took on the role of functional mobility, particularly in assistive mobility devices.
- Mobility should be approached based on functionality, efficiency, contextual factors, and exploration rather than motor patterns and conventional approaches that focus on ‘normal’ walking patterns (Anaby, et al., 2016; Darrah et al., 2011; Lobo et al., 2013).
- OTs are specialists in analyzing context and environment to improve participation suggesting that OTs have a critical role as part of a team addressing both functional mobility and assistive mobility devices for children.
- Further study is needed on why OTs are not included in this process or perceive that functional mobility and assistive mobility devices are not their role.

CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

- Research – design and implementation process
- Connect with the community involved with AT
- Attend Advocacy meetings and events
- Interact with various pediatric populations
- Assistive Technology Club Development
- Participate as Senior Editor of the Student Journal of Occupational Therapy (re-launch)

References



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