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Aims and Objectives

To review the evidence base to clarify the role and effectiveness of occupational therapy in the promotion of mental health and in prevention and recovery from mental illness for children, adolescents and young adults (0-25 years).

Methodology

1. Methodological Review
   - A systematic review of the literature was conducted to identify relevant literature relating to the effectiveness of occupational therapy in mental health for children and young people (CYP).
   - Analyse and critically appraise literature that met the inclusion criteria (Figure 2).
   - Undertake a thematic analysis of the literature appraised.

2. Critical Appraisal
   - Diversity of studies (summarised in Table 2) precluded meta-analysis.
   - Highest quality of evidence was found from other disciplines to support interventions which could be done by occupational therapists.
   - High quality studies supported interventions targeting development of social skills through play.

3. Thematic Analysis
   - Four themes were identified from the PRISMA diagram (Figure 2).
   - An analysis of 11 sub-themes revealed many inter-relationships with social factors interwoven throughout.

4. Literature Search
   - 13 articles met the inclusion criteria.
   - 5 literature reviews, 4 quantitative, 3 qualitative studies and a PhD thesis.

5. Table of References

6. Table of Themes Across Studies

7. Role of occupational therapist

8. Engagement in activities

9. Symptom management

10. Promotion

11. Physical and emotional well-being

12. Skill development

13. Medication

14. Not effectivant

15. Relationship with family

16. Meaningful

17. Critical

18. Proactive

19. Serial

20. Universal

21. Targeted

22. Immediate

23. Long-term

Summary of Findings

The effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions identified as supporting mental health is influenced by:
- A positive relationship with the client, i.e. the ability to engage and connect with young people.
- A supportive social context enabling access to positive peer relationships and models.
- Participation in play and self-directed activities, enabling mastery of skills to promote acceptance and belonging.

Different roles of the occupational therapist include:
- Supporting parenting/caregiving occupations to encourage attachment and relationship building, and modelling of positive social interactions for the younger social reference groups.
- Enhancing emotional social development of CYP.
- Advocacy to promote positive self-identity, autonomy and adaptive transitions from adolescence to adulthood.

CONCLUSIONS

Recommendations for Future Practice & Research

Key gap knowledge:
- Child and adolescent perspectives on wellbeing.

Priorities for future research:
- Rigorous outcome measures required.
- Studies to ensure the voices of adolescents are heard.

Interdisciplinary collaborative approaches to characterise key components of occupational therapy interventions.

Inter-disciplinary studies incorporating neuro-psychological and occupation-focused interventions within school/educational settings.

Recommendations for practice:
- Interventions enabling mastery of skills through personally valued, self-directed activities in a supportive environment.
- Mental health and well-being in CYP.
- Occupation-focused interventions by be effectively provided by other staff, e.g. following assessment, intervention planning and education from OT.

References for Included Studies


