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The World Health Organization (WHO) is developing a Master Plan for Mental Health to more clearly outline and promote the role of occupational therapy in mental health. This review focuses on mental health practice for children and young people, as the onset of mental illness commonly occurs in adolescence.

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. Literature Search
   - Databases: Cochrane library of systematic reviews, MEDLINE, AMED, PsychINFO, Child and Adolescent Development Studies and OTSeeker databases.
   - Time Frame: Articles from 2011-2015 were selected to update a previous WOTF literature search from 2004-2012 (Ceramiadis et al., 2012; Nevd, 2012).
   - Search Terms: “Aim” and “role of” or “Youth” or “young people” or “adolescents” or “adolescent” or “youth” and “occupational therapy” or “OT” and “OT therapy” or “OTist” or “OTist” or “OTSeeker” databases.

2. Critical Analysis
   - The McGill Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), was used (Pluye et al., 2011) to enable qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies to be critically appraised.

3. Thematic Analysis
   - An inductive approach was taken to explore and interpret themes that emerged from the selected articles (Thomas and Harden, 2008).

Summary of Findings

The effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions identified mental health was 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 relations 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/care-giving occupations to encourage attachment and relationship building, and modelling of positive social interactions for the younger generations.
- Enhancing social-emotional development of CYP.
- Advocacy to promote positive self-identity, autonomy and adaptive transitions from adolescence to adulthood.

Recommendations for Practice & Research

Interventions enabling mastery of skills through personally valued, self-directed activities in a supportive, normalising environment can include: mental health and wellbeing in CYP.

Occupational-focused interventions can be effectively provided by other staff, e.g. following assessment, intervention planning and education from OT.