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The Importance of Preferred Meaningful Occupations for Children with Medically Complex Conditions

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

By Kaylee Schmit, OTS Faculty Advisor: Dr. Allison Naber

Background and Purpose

Background:

The term medically complex refers to a child with a medical condition or multiple medical conditions requiring continued specialized care (Children First Health Care System, 2020). Medically complex conditions can be lifethreatening or limit a child's functional abilities. The limitations that children experience can affect their ability to engage in their preferred meaningful occupations (Amery, 2016). Children in the hospital, due to their medically complex conditions, can experience further limitations to their ability to participate in meaningful occupations including play (Koukourikos et al., 2015). In occupational therapy (OT), we believe that play is the primary occupation of children (Jasem et al., 2020). Engagement in meaningful occupations for children can help increase confidence and self-esteem, create an interactive and fun environment, and contribute to cognitive, social, physical, mental, and emotional development (Jasem et al., 2020; Koukourikos et al., 2015; Sergent & Morise, 2021).

Purpose:

 The purpose of this capstone is to develop in-depth clinical experience in the treatment of children with medically complex conditions and develop the knowledge and skills related to the use of preferred meaningful occupations.

Theoretical Foundations

Model of Human Occupation (MOHO)

- This theory informed this capstone project by focusing on the constructs of volition, habituation, and performance capacity (Kielhofner, 2008)
- Volition refers to a client's motivation toward their chosen activities (Boyt Schell & Gillen, 2019).
- MOHO was applied to my project as meaningful occupations were used as the motivator for my patients. I found ways to work towards their goals, while also making OT interesting and engaging. Children with medically complex conditions may have limitations to their performance capacity, but this theory supports breaking down a task and using alternative methods to promote engagement in meaningful occupations.

Model of Children's Play

- This model was a complementary theory that guided this project by looking at a child's play skills and behaviors related to their developmental capacities and the environment's influence on them (Cooper, 2000).
- This model was used with my project by helping to address a patient's play abilities and how their medical condition may impact how they play.

Project Methods

Population:

- Children in the pediatric inpatient unit at Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital in Omaha, NE
- Must be 18 years or younger for placement on the pediatric unit

Procedures and Activities:

- Completed continuing education courses, collaborated with other healthcare professionals, and tracked treatment sessions
- Created handouts on different types of play, presented to OT students, and explored play assessments

Assessment Instruments:

- Pediatric Interest Profiles
- Pre- and Post-Presentation Surveys

Results

Pediatric Interest Profiles (Figure 1)

- Used to determine preferred meaningful occupations of each patient.
- Responses were collected from a total of 13 pediatric patients.
- The larger font indicates the most common meaningful occupations among multiple patients, with the smaller font indicating less commonality.

Pre and Post Presentation Surveys

- 5 participants (OT students from the University of South Dakota) attended the presentation and filled out the pre and post surveys.
- The pre-survey asked participants to identify their current knowledge and comfort levels on certain topics (see Table 1).
- The post-survey asked participants to reflect on the presentation and determine if their knowledge or comfort of each topic increased (see Table 2).
- 5 question survey
- Question 1: Knowledge of Preferred Meaningful Occupations
- Question 2: Comfort Level with Working with Pediatric Population
- Question 3: Knowledge of Medically Complex Conditions
- Question 4: Comfort with Working with Medically Complex Conditions
- Question 5: Comfort with Incorporating Preferred Meaningful Occupations into OT Sessions
- Data analysis revealed that with each category, knowledge and comfort slightly increased or increased.

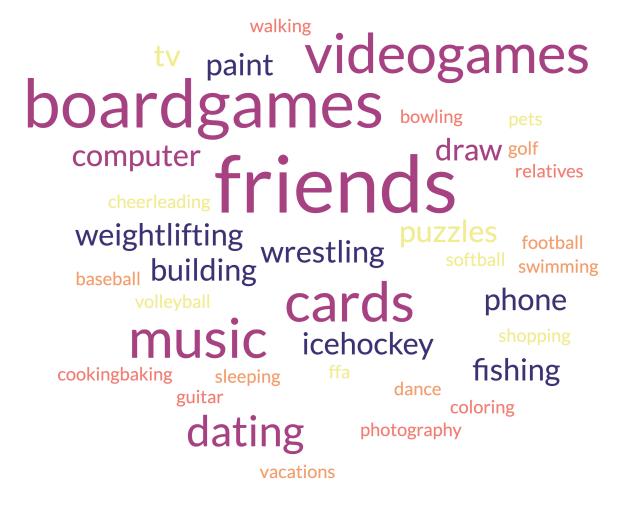
Table 1

Response	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Extremely		1			
knowledgeable/comfortable					
Moderately	4	2		1	
knowledgeable/comfortable					
Slightly	1	2	3		2
knowledgeable/comfortable					
Neither				2	3
knowledgeable/comfortable nor					
unknowledgeable/uncomfortable					
Slightly			1	2	
unknowledgeable/uncomfortable					
Moderately			1		
unknowledgeable/uncomfortable					
Extremely					
unknowledgeable/uncomfortable					

Table 2

Post-Survey Responses RESPONSE	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
Increased	4	4	3	3	5
Slightly increased	1	1	2	2	
Remained the same					

Figure 1



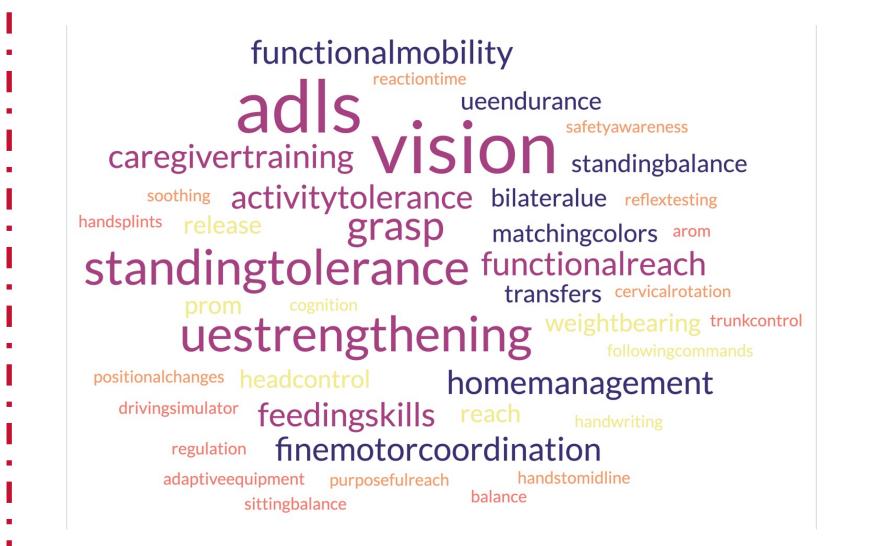
Patient Demographics

- Children of a variety of diagnoses and ages were included in this project (see Table 3).
- A variety of skills were targeted through play. Some of the play activities incorporated include volleyball, softball/baseball, hockey, board/card games, and arts/crafts.
- With the play activities, the skills targeted are found in the word cloud (see Figure 2).

Table 3

Fallent	Age	Frimary Diagnosis	
Patient 1	15 years old	Multi-trauma, Traumatic brain injury	
Patient 2	16 years old	Stable burst fracture 2 nd lumbar vertebrae, Spinal cord injury	
Patient 3	15 years old	Cerebral vascular accident	
Patient 4	17 years old	Asphyxiation due to hanging, hypoxic brain injury	
Patient 5	3 months old	Asphyxiation due to unspecified cause, Hypoxic encephalopathy	
Patient 6	16 years old	Multi-trauma, Traumatic brain injury	
Patient 7	16 years old	Spinal cord injury without radiographic abnormality	
Patient 8	4 years old	Congenital heart disease	
Patient 9	10 years old	Meningitis, influenza, seizures	
Patient 10	10 years old	Heart transplant	
Patient 11	5 years old	Hemispherectomy	
Patient 12	18 years old	Anoxic brain injury	
Patient 13	8 years old	Bilateral proximal femur osteotomies, Spastic diplegic cerebral palsy	

Figure 2



Discussion/Conclusion

- Play helps promote the cognitive, social, emotional, and physical abilities of patients (Jasem et al., 2020).
- There is a statistically significant positive impact on performance and participation in play and leisure when activity-based interventions are used (Cahill & Biesbier, 2020).
- When play is used by all healthcare professionals, it is valuable for emotional development (Koukourikos et al., 2015).
- The Pediatric Interest Profiles assessment was useful for identifying preferred meaningful occupations, however, an alternative assessment to consider would be the Takata Play History.
 - The Takata Play History uses both interview and observation to identify a child's play experiences, interactions, environments, and opportunities (Takata, 1974).
- Knowledge, skills, and attitudes about preferred meaningful occupations, medically complex conditions, and the pediatric inpatient setting were gained throughout this project.
- Overall, incorporating preferred meaningful occupations for children with medically complex conditions is valuable for the overall development of the child.
- Play looks different for all children and can depend on the age and functional ability of the child.
- Play can be challenging in the hospital setting but is very crucial for skill development.
- OTs should continue to incorporate play into OT practice and research how play affects therapy outcomes.

Implications for Occupational Therapy

- There are many benefits to incorporating preferred meaningful occupations into OT sessions.
- Play is the primary occupation for children, making it an essential component of OT interventions regardless of the setting.
- Play should be utilized for all children and should take place in all settings.
 Play is a valuable tool for children with medically complex conditions and can be used as a tool by any healthcare professional.
- Research on the importance of play and the use of play in OT for children with medically complex conditions should continue to be explored.

References

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Thank you!

