Evidence-based Practice: Overcoming the Barriers
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Background
Evidence-based practice (EBP) is defined as the “integration of best research evidence with clinical expertise and patient values” (Sackett, Straus, Richardson, Rosenberg & Haynes, 2000)

EBP & Occupational Therapy:
- Identified as a professional priority (AOTA, 2007)
- Increasingly demanded by consumers (Bennet & Bennet, 2000)
- Required for reimbursement by insurance companies (Hinojosa, 2013)

Rationale & Purpose
Existing literature on EBP generally focuses on:
1. Identifying OT role of engagement in EBP
2. Identifying barriers to EBP
   - Time, Access, Productivity demands
3. Proposing theoretical models for implementing EBP

The literature has identified the steps involved in implementing EBP (Straus, Richardson, Glazic, & Haynes, 2005). However, very little research exists on how occupational therapists apply research evidence to their practice in real time.

This study strives to bridge that gap by providing qualitative narratives that describe how occupational therapists apply research evidence to their practice in real time.

Design & Methods
- IRB obtained for qualitative, phenomenological design
- Snowball-convenience sampling used to recruit participant through email, personal contact, LinkedIn, program Facebook page
- Sample criteria: Occupational therapy practitioners who self-identified as applying research evidence at least “some of the time.”
- Informed consent obtained
- 1:1 interviews conducted by telephone, in-person, or video conferencing
- Word-for-word transcription of interviews
- Constant, comparative, qualitative data analysis completed by research team using Atlas.ti

Results
Factors that emerged as most influential over therapist use of EBP

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Supports
- Assumption of leadership
- Post-professional education
- Willingness to try new therapies
- "I think [EBP is] an important part of being professional"
- "If I want to know something, I just go and find it and read it. I have always been that way."

Barriers
- Knowledge gap
- Internal motivation
- "I don’t understand what I’m reading when I read research"
- Resources
- Lack of OT research
- Lack of doing research
- "The research isn’t always there"
- "There doesn’t seem to be a ton of research out there"

Workplace Factors
- No access to research databases
- Productivity standards
- Time
- "I get conflicted because they want more, more, more. More documentation, fewer visits."
- "At my job I can’t go on the AOTA site. They looked it from a security standpoint."

Current models do not factor in real-life circumstances
- Productivity requirements restrict available time to search for evidence
- Time constraints & resource limitations are not factored into current 5-step model
- Formal critical appraisals of research papers were not done by interviewees
- PICO (problem, intervention, comparison, outcome) questions were not used by interviewees

Networking and leadership
- OTs actively engaging in evidence-based practice frequently served in leadership roles
- Many actively instructed other therapists in steps needed for EBP

Unintended consequences
- Medicaid, Medicare and workplace requirements for exclusive use of EBP discourages use of newer, innovative therapies
- Limited research supporting many OT interventions leads therapists to reconsider using techniques with anecdotal support

Work outside of work
- All subjects who regularly engage in evidence-based practice do research after hours from home
- Therapists with significant demands on their time outside of work (e.g. kids, other work) may be less likely to engage in EBP

Discussion
This study found that occupational therapists face significant barriers to implementing EBP in their practice. "I think [EBP is] an important part of being professional" and "If I want to know something, I just go and find it and read it. I have always been that way." However, therapists struggle with "the research isn’t always there" and "there doesn’t seem to be a ton of research out there." Workplace factors, such as limited access to research databases, productivity standards, and time constraints, further compound these challenges.

References

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