THE NEED FOR AND VALUE OF YOGA RESEARCH

ARLENE A. SCHMID, PHD, OTR, YT
OBJECTIVES

• Why this talk?
• What is evidence based practice (therapy, medicine)?
• Do we need evidence for yoga therapy?
  • How do we get this evidence?
  • How do we use this evidence?
  • How do we keep the ‘yoga’ in yoga research?
WHY THIS TALK?

• A little bit about me and my trajectory…..
• How and why do I care about yoga and yoga research?
• Yoga therapy might parallel occupational therapy….
YOGA AND REHABILITATION

• Article entitled – ‘Yoga, an ancient occupational therapy?’
  • OT and yoga concerned with the “whole person,” integrating body, mind, and spirit in practice
• Therapists can use yoga as a modality to facilitate relaxation, mindfulness, decrease pain, fatigue, depression
• Bring yoga therapists into rehabilitation

(Mailoo, 2005)
WHO WANTS YOGA TO BE COVERED BY INSURANCE?

I DO....I WANT IT TO BE PART OF REHABILITATION!

BUT WE CAN’T DO IT WITHOUT EVIDENCE....

US Department of Health and Human Services says...

“Yoga is often recommended as a form of total-solution exercise...although there is little scientific evidence to support this recommendation”

Our goals...
• Bring scientific evidence to this statement, specifically to neurological conditions
• Integrate yoga as an aspect of rehabilitation

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Investments in Complementary and Alternative Medicine Related to Aging. 2011)
WHAT IS SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE?

• The idea that science, via research, supports an idea, intervention, or correct way to do something

• A big movement that started over 20 years ago in medicine and then therapies (occupational therapy, etc)
WHAT IS EVIDENCE BASED THERAPY?

- Thought about as evidence based-
  - Medicine
  - Practice
  - Therapy
  
  Depends on who you are and your background

- Application of the best available evidence in a setting

- In 1992 – JAMA called it a NEW and EMERGING paradigm for medical practice

Guyatt, et al, JAMA, 1992
ARE THERE BARRIERS?

• Yes!
  • Lack of evidence
  • Quality of the evidence
  • Trouble accessing the current evidence
  • Trouble reading the evidence – statistics!
  • Difficulties moving research into clinical practice (it takes years!)
  • Need to teach clinicians and therapists
    • New skills
    • How to search the literature
    • How to evaluate the published evidence
    • How to implement the evidence

Guyatt, JAMA, 1992; Grimmer, Physiotherapy, 2004; Metcalfe Physiotherapy, 2001
OT AND EVIDENCE BASED THERAPY

20+ YEARS OF WORK....
PERCEPTIONS OF EBP FROM OTS

• “Changing out initial assessment caused a **big uproar** because it meant leaving a real...way of doing OT and it meant sitting down and really thinking ‘what am I going to do with this client’, and there are times when it would be challenging”

• “My limitation is **that I don’t know quite how and what to do**…”

• This is how we have done it, this is how we will always do it – have you heard (or thought) this before?

Duboulos et al. 1999, AJOT
PERCEPTIONS OF EBP FROM OTs

• But also….  
  • “I think that we are fooling ourselves if we don’t incorporate evidence based practice. The practice of OT would be doomed…”

• In order to stay relevant, and part of the health care continuum, we must develop and use evidence in OT (and yoga therapy?)

Duboulos et al. 1999, AJOT; Holm 2000, AJOT
DO WE NEED EVIDENCE FOR YOGA THERAPY?

• How do we get this evidence for yoga therapy?
• How do we use this evidence in yoga therapy?
• And so importantly.....
How do we standardize yoga interventions, but maintain the ‘yoga’ in the yoga intervention?
HOW DO WE GET THIS EVIDENCE?

• Funded research – any $ is $!
• Publications outside of yoga or therapy journals
• Volunteer to work with researchers
• More robust research trials with
  • Standardized yoga protocols
  • Control groups (not everyone gets yoga 😞)
  • Blinding
  • Long term follow up
HOW DO WE GET AND USE THIS EVIDENCE?

• How do we develop and use this evidence in yoga therapy?
  • Same as in OT!
  • Review the literature
  • Start a journal club
  • Work with researchers
    • Write a case study
    • Develop the yoga intervention for a yoga research study
    • Work with the researchers to be an author on a publication
How do we standardize yoga interventions, but maintain the ‘yoga’ in the yoga intervention?
THIS IS NOT A NOVEL CONCERN....

OT WAS WORRIED TOO....
PERCEPTIONS OF EBP FROM OTS

• “How do I meld the two together (research and client’s input) so that I’m sensitive to this larger body of research but I’m also sensitive to my role as an occupational therapist?”

• Can we standardize OT enough to test it and prove its effectiveness while still delivering OT? (and maintaining the heart of OT?)

• What do we measure to show it works?

Duboulos et al. 1999, AJOT
KEEPING IT YOGA

• Hard to measure outcomes, but we are seeing...
  • Way to reconnect the mind and body after a traumatic event (stroke, car accident)
  • Immobilization and pain quickly cause a disconnect – that can last for years....
  • Helps to stop the rumination about the event
  • Meditation and breath work are powerful even if the asana can not be practiced

Schmid, in press, IJYT; Schmid, 2012, Stroke
KEEPING IT YOGA

• We **can** standardize a yoga intervention – but tailor it to the needs of the individual
  • Every yoga class you teach?

• We **can** include physical postures, breath work, relaxation, meditation, chanting, affirmations and other aspects of yoga

• Research studies may be a **gateway** to yoga for people who would never try yoga otherwise
If we know all of this….how can we not need and value research to support yoga therapy?

Enjoy learning about yoga research and how researchers are working with yoga teachers and therapists around the country to bring yoga to people with disabilities....

Walk away knowing that yoga researchers typically love and embrace yoga and are only trying to bring the evidence to yoga therapy so that yoga can be accessible to all....