



Occupational therapy for clients with cognitive impairments following acquired brain injury

– Occupational therapists' perspective

av

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Abstract

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The overall aim of this thesis was to describe occupational therapy practice for clients with cognitive impairment following acquired brain injury (CIA-BI) from the perspective of practicing occupational therapists (OTs).

To fulfill this aim, qualitative and quantitative approaches were used including interviews (Study I) and questionnaires (Studies II-IV). Based on the qualitative descriptions generated in Study I, a questionnaire was developed and evaluated for content validity and test-retest validity (Study II). The questionnaire was then used in a survey (Study III). The reactive Delphi technique was used to empirically define the aspects that OTs found to be consistent with the concept of therapeutic use of self (Study IV).

The results showed that a predominant practice pattern was the use of ADL activities for intervention regardless of whether limitations in occupational performance or cognitive function were assessed, or whether the approach to therapy was remedial or compensatory. General ADL-instruments were used more than instruments focused on impairment level. Therapies covering a wide range of cognitive impairments, and abilities important to organizing and executing occupational performance were commonly targeted. Therapies targeting clients' activity limitations were prioritized before remediating impairment. Therapeutic use of self was regarded as being important and the results identified client-specific aims not earlier described in relation to therapeutic use of self. Another prominent practice pattern was the collaborative approach toward clients, relatives, and other staff. Theories used to support practice were primarily general. Occupational therapy practice for clients with CIABI was found to be complex, and the practice patterns were affected by circumstances such as the 'hidden' nature of the cognitive impairments, perceived lack of knowledge, and organizational issues. The results of this thesis can be used as a foundation for further research on practice patterns or the specific therapies used. It can facilitate discussions on strengths and weaknesses with current practice, the need for development, and research utilization.

Keywords: occupational therapy, cognition, rehabilitation, practice, acquired brain injury, stroke, TBI, assessment, intervention.

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