OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Bridging the Gap Between Mental Health and Rehabilitation:

Strategies for Occupational Therapy in Acute Neurological Rehabilitation

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uchealth

BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

- OTPs report limited formal education in mental health beyond entry-level coursework, lack of access to resources, time constraints due to an increase in productivity demands, and an institutional culture that prioritizes physical recovery over psychosocial care; all of which contribute to decreased confidence to address mental health concerns[6,7,8]
- A gap exists in bringing research to practice, therefore contributing to the limited provision of evidence-based resources to OTPs seeking to address mental health[7]
- Symptoms associated with depression, anxiety, and stress contribute to emotional dysregulation and are strongly associated with reduced participation and performance in meaningful occupations following a stroke or TBI[1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 11]

Goals

- Increase OT confidence to address mental health
- Increase OT self-perceived competence to implement mental health strategies

Objectives

- Gain experience and understanding of current OT practice in acute neurological rehabilitation
- Provide feasible mental health resources and strategies to address OT team's unique needs

Activities

- Observe OT practice in acute neurosciences setting
- Collect & analyze OT survey data
- Refine approaches
- Implement education/training
- Develop digital psychosocial toolkit
- Support OTs in the provision of mental health care

EVALUATION METHODS

Observation

- Decline in Behavioral Health Team & system support
- Interdisciplinary communication gaps and role confusion
- Positive impact of trauma-informed, person-centered care strategies
- Need and desire for mental health resources

Interviews & Informal Discussions

- "The resources are there, they're just not packaged in a way to be used effectively"

Pre-program Survey

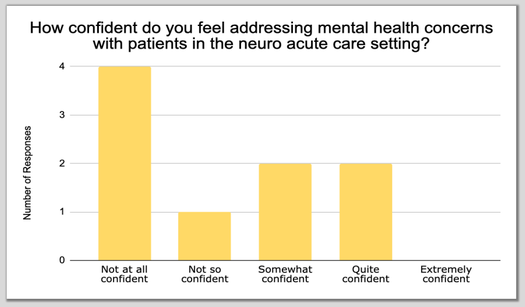
- Confidence levels
- Self-perceived competence
- Current perceptions of mental health care
- Assessments & strategies currently used
- Primary barriers

Post-program Survey

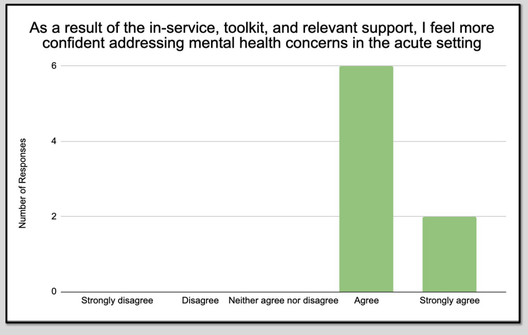
- Changes in confidence and competence
- Feasibility of assessments & strategies
- Use of toolkit
- Integration of mental health strategies

OUTCOMES & FINDINGS

OTPs working in the acute care setting at UCH reported very low to moderate confidence to address mental health amongst individuals with neurological diagnoses → OTPs reported increased confidence to address mental health following the provision of tailored education, resources, and consultative support → OTPs reported increased performance and participation in therapy activities in patients experiencing mental health challenges



"It's discouraging to know there are things I can do to address mental health, but not knowing where or how to start."



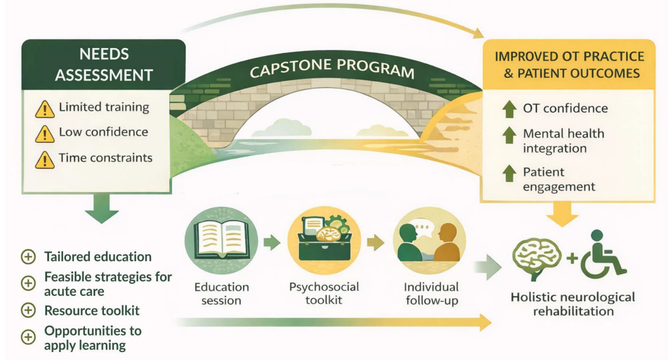
"These strategies have been a simple, yet effective way to not only validate our patients' experience but provide them with tools to become more self-sufficient in their recovery."

"Anxiety was a major barrier to her participation; she struggled with the idea of just sitting at the edge of the bed because her fear of movement and falling was so intense. But using mindfulness and problem-solving before movement has helped her make significant progress. Now she can get to the chair and regulate much more quickly."

DISCUSSION

Identified primary barriers	Addressed needs	Continued monitoring	Sustainability
Lack of education and training	Education + training in-service	Adjust resources based on identified challenges	Trained mental health champion
Low confidence	Digital psychosocial toolkit	Provision of direct support	Inclusion of toolkit navigation video
Time constraints			Inclusion of in-service presentation recording

CONCLUSION



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References

Scan me!