

# Empowered Engagement: An Occupational Therapy Group Curriculum for Chronic Pain Self-Management

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## BACKGROUND

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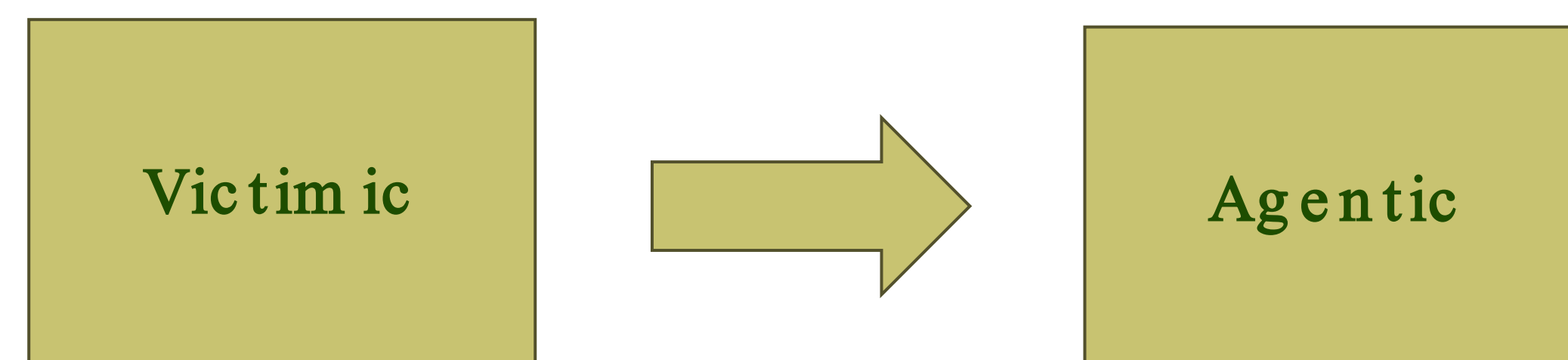
Chronic pain affects 24.3% of adults in the United States and significantly impacts occupational participation, mental health, and quality of life (Lucas & Sohi, 2024). Chronic pain impacts work, social participation, mobility, health management, and sleep, highlighting the need for occupation-based and client-centered approaches to care (Iagueux et al., 2018; McMurtry et al., 2020).

### Project Purpose:

To address a gap in chronic pain management through the development of an evidence-informed, occupation-based group curriculum focused on self-management, pain self-efficacy, and occupational participation.

### Theoretical Framework:

Guided by the Agentic and Victimic Model of Chronic Pain Management, emphasizing self-management, adaptive coping, and engagement in occupations to support chronic pain management (Van Huet et al., 2013).



## GOALS & LEARNING OBJECTIVES

### Goal:

The goal of this project was to develop and implement an OT group curriculum for individuals with chronic pain to support self-management, education, and occupational modification, with effectiveness measured through improved self-efficacy and occupational participation.

### Learning Objectives:

1. Complete a comprehensive literature review on chronic pain management and OT interventions, reviewing at least 15 research articles within the first 3 weeks, to ensure the curriculum is grounded in evidence-based practices.
2. Develop a detailed group OT curriculum, including at least 5 OT group session plans with an activity in each group and educational materials for each session by the end of week 6.
3. Pilot the curriculum with at least one group of participants each week, completing group sessions by the end of week 11, and collecting quantitative and qualitative feedback using a Likert scale measuring feasibility, adoption, acceptability, self-perceived benefits (self-efficacy, satisfaction, and performance in occupations), aiming for a minimum satisfaction score of 80%.
4. Analyze participant feedback and outcomes by end of week 12, revising and finalizing the curriculum based on insights gained, with the goal of improving key outcome measures (e.g. self-efficacy and enhanced occupational participation) to ensure long-term sustainability.

## ACTIVITIES

### Literature Review & Needs Assessment:

Reviewed 15+ articles on chronic pain, chronic illness, and OT interventions, and conducted a needs assessment to identify gaps in self-management support and inform program focus.

### Program Outreach:

Created and modified provider-facing handouts to promote the program and support participant recruitment through medical providers.

### Curriculum Development:

Developed a 5-session OT self-management curriculum with structured activities and educational materials.

### Program Implementation:

Led 5 OT group sessions over 6 weeks, maintained participant communication, and adapted content as needed.

### Outcome Evaluation:

Collected pre/post Pain Self-Efficacy data and Likert-scale feedback on satisfaction, feasibility, and perceived benefits.

### Data Analysis & Refinement:

Analyzed outcomes and participant feedback to revise and finalize the curriculum.

## OUTCOME EVALUATION METHODS

### Pre- and Post

Pain Self-Efficacy Questionnaire administered pre- and post-intervention to measure changes in confidence managing chronic pain

### Session-based feedback

Surveys incorporating Pain Self-Efficacy Questionnaire items, Likert-scale ratings, and qualitative questions to assess satisfaction, self-perceived benefits, and occupational performance (target ≥80% satisfaction)

Mixed-methods analysis of quantitative and qualitative data to guide curriculum revisions and support improvements in self-efficacy and occupational participation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Aaron Eakman, – Faculty Mentor
- Julie Silver-Seidel – Doctoral Capstone Coordinator
- Angela Gray – Capstone Office
- Participants of the groups

## FINDINGS

| Quantitative Findings                                                                                                                                 | Qualitative Findings                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Five participants completed the pre- and post-questionnaire                                                                                           | Social Connection & Belonging: being with others who understand their experience                                                                                                        |
| Mean pain self-efficacy increased from 18.2 to 26.8 (+8.6)                                                                                            | Validation: feeling seen, heard, and believed                                                                                                                                           |
| Large effect size ( $d = 1.02$ ), indicating meaningful clinically important improvement                                                              | Access to Resources & Knowledge: lack of resources, group filled a gap                                                                                                                  |
| Results were not statistically significant ( $p = 0.085$ ), likely due to small sample size, but still demonstrated clinically meaningful improvement | Emotional Impact & Value of group: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "Experience is invaluable"</li><li>• "I cried in the bathroom once I found out this group existed"</li></ul> |
| High satisfaction ( $\geq 80\%$ ), measured through Likert-scale feedback surveys (ratings $\geq 4/5$ )                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                         |

## DISCUSSION/ CONCLUSION

### Clinical Significance:

This project supports the use of holistic, client-centered, and occupation-based approaches to chronic pain management that address chronic pain-related participation challenges while supporting increased pain self-efficacy and long-term self-management.

### Sustainability:

The curriculum provides a foundation for continued implementation within the site and supports the long-term integration of chronic pain self-management education and occupation-based group programming within practice settings.

### Implications for Occupational Therapy:

This project addressed a gap in chronic pain management and highlights the need for expanded occupational therapy involvement through evidence-based, occupation-based group interventions focused on self-management and occupational participation.

## REFERENCES

