OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Holistic Pelvic Floor Therapy: Establishing OT in Pelvic Health Through Advocacy and Health Promotion

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BACKGROUND

Pelvic Floor Dysfunction (PFD) refers to a wide range of clinical conditions affecting the pelvic structures, including urinary and fecal incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, dyspareunia, and chronic pelvic pain.[1] **In the United States, approximately 25% of women are diagnosed with PFD**, and by 2050 these numbers are expected to double.[2,3]

Despite the widespread prevalence of PFD, **symptoms are often underdiagnosed and undertreated.**[2] Left unaddressed, PFD is associated with orthopedic impairments, adverse mental health conditions, poor quality of life, decreased participation in social and leisure activities, and impaired performance in activates of daily living.[4,5]

To address the complex etiology of PFD, a biopsychosocial approach to rehabilitation is essential.[6] **Occupational therapists (OT) are well suited to address these needs, given their natural consideration of mental, physical, and environmental contexts.**[7] In the context of pelvic floor therapy (PFT), OT's role aims to enable participation in the occupations disrupted by dysfunction[8] through multiple strategies including therapeutic exercise, neuromuscular re-education, lifestyle modification, and manual therapy. However, **OT's role in this setting remains under-researched and underrepresented.**

PROJECT GOAL

Establish and support the provision of PFT services at a private practice in the Fort Collins area, to enhance biopsychosocial and occupational performance through occupational therapy.

OBJECTVIES

1. A comprehensive needs assessment will be conducted using hands-on clinical practice in a PFT clinic, stakeholder interviews, surveys, and a SWOT analysis, to determine organizational needs, understand the lived experiences and occupational needs of clients with PFD, and inform program development.
2. Increased community outreach will be completed using community workshops, inter-professional collaboration, and educational resources, to improve community knowledge of pelvic health and increase the accessibility of PTF services, as measured by survey data, media analytics, and organizational evaluation.
3. The OT at the capstone site will report increased clinical competence of PFT evaluation and treatment strategies, using a comprehensive pelvic health portfolio, clinical skill practice, and therapeutic tools, to provide client centered and evidence-based pelvic health care.

METHODS

Needs Assessment

SWOT analysis of data gathered from stakeholder interviews and a clinical competence rubric

Clinical practice at *The Happy Pelvis* and *Covell*

Identified Needs

Therapist

- Education and training on clinical skills used in PTF.
- Increased patient intakes at *The Happy Pelvis*.

Community

- Education on PFD and OT's role in PFT.
- Guidance on screening for PFD and making referrals.
- Increased access to PFT.

Patient

- Education on diagnosis, etiology, prognosis, and care.
- Support for at-home compliance with exercise programs and lifestyle modifications.

Community Outreach

1. Professional networking including education on OT's role in PFT and development of collaborative outreach strategies.
2. Development and delivery of a community workshop on pelvic health and pain management during pregnancy.
3. Development and delivery of a professional training for doula's focused on screening and referring for PFD.
4. Implementation of a free-community screening for PFD.
5. Creation of educational resources including digital and print media, disseminated to local organizations and online platforms.

Therapeutic Tools

1. Development and application of clinical tools including patient handouts, home exercise program software, and electronic medical record templates.
2. Completion of continuing education courses and clinical skill practice meetings with the capstone mentor.
3. Development and delivery of a *Pelvic Portfolio:* a personalized resource guide including educational content, evidenced-based evaluation and treatment strategies, instruction for clinical techniques, and patient case studies.

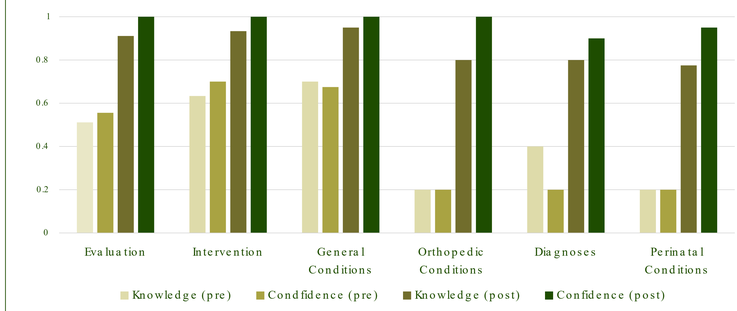
OUTCOME EVALUATION METHODS

1. Creation and administration of a clinical competence rubric, used to measure the impact of capstone activities on therapist clinical skills and knowledge.
2. Pre/post workshop surveys used to measure participant knowledge.
3. Clinical documentation logs including patient data and the use of new therapeutic tools/skills implemented to track the provision and impact of pelvic floor therapy services.
4. Continuous feedback on all project materials from stakeholders.

FINDINGS

Project impacts include an increased volume of patients evaluated and treated at the clinic, improved clinical competence of the OT working at the clinic, (see Figure 1.) and greater community knowledge of OT's role in pelvic health. Long term impacts are expected to promote better biopsychosocial outcomes related to PFD, thus increasing occupational performance through holistic pelvic floor therapy services.

Figure 1: Clinical Competence- Pelvic Health Scores



This assessment was administered at the start and end of the capstone experience to better understand the therapist's perceived knowledge and confidence related to aspects of pelvic floor therapy practice through quantitative Likert-scale data. Scores in each category were normalized and converted from a raw score into a percentage to account for differences in each categories maximum possible score.

DISSCUSSION

OT's face several barriers to practicing in pelvic floor therapy settings, despite the clear psychosocial and occupational needs of patients experiencing dysfunction. To address these barriers, OT's must advocate for inclusion in pelvic health settings and continuously evaluate both community and patient needs to improve the quality of services provided.

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REFERENCES

References

Logic Model

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