

Balancing activities of daily living to improve occupational performance: a single-case study with chronic pain patients

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Introduction: Chronic pain is a prevalent condition that may affect all aspects of a person's life. Rehabilitation is often needed to restore patients' occupational performance in activities of daily living. During rehabilitation, a number of occupational therapy interventions may be provided; pacing, ergonomics and quota-based activity programs. Though interventions like these are considered part of standard treatment for chronic pain there is limited scientific evidence to support them and therefore there is a need to study these interventions.

Objectives: This study aimed to describe and explore occupational performance before, during and after an occupational therapy intervention.

Methods: The study had a single-case ABA design. To measure the primary outcome of occupational performance the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure was used. Secondary outcomes involved pain, pain interference in activities of daily living, balance in activity and occupational needs. Five patients with chronic pain were studied during an occupational therapy intervention called 'Balance in Daily Activities'. The intervention aimed to improve occupational performance by teaching strategies to counteract activity patterns of overactivity and underactivity. The intervention was part of a larger multiprofessional and interdisciplinary rehabilitation program in Sweden. Analysis involved both visual inspection and statistics.

Results: Different patterns of change in occupational performance and occupational satisfaction were seen among the five participants. Both improvements and deteriorations of the dependent variables were discovered. Furthermore, it was revealed that occupational performance and occupational satisfaction changed both jointly and/or independently with large variations.

Conclusion: Results indicate that the intervention 'Balance in Daily Activities' partially influenced occupational performance and occupational satisfaction and that these outcomes can change jointly or independently. The intervention seems to work well for some patients, but not for all. Additional research with a larger sample is needed to establish the patterns of change, the interventions utility and its effects.

Contribution to practice: Distinctive patterns of occupational performance and occupational satisfaction exist among chronic pain clients. As a result, occupational therapists need to be attentive, evaluate progress and assess need of intervention change or termination. This could be done by conducting frequent assessments of patients' occupational performance and occupational satisfaction.