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An Occupational Perspective To Pain: Integrating Pain Theory And Biophysiology In Pain Management

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Learning Objectives:

- 1: Describe pain theories.
- 2: Describe the biophysiological effects of pain on occupational performance.
- 3: Discuss the assessment and treatment of pain.

Length of Time: 1.5 hours

Maximum participants: 100+.

Teaching Methods: Lecture and case based

Pain is a universal experience and one of the most common complaints for which individuals seek medical attention. Pain is also a multidimensional experience with many patients treated by occupational therapists reporting pain as one of the primary components limiting their ability to engage in occupational roles and tasks. The physiological response to pain can also affect an individual's occupational performance skills. Common outcomes of pain include muscle spasm, guarding, or protecting the injured area.

Pain is a multidimensional experience possessing a psychological, socioeconomic and physiological effect on the individual and community (Talo, Rytokoski, Hmalainen, & Kallio, 1996). Pain can be characterized as acute, chronic or referred. When an injury or illness occurs, the damaged tissue will release intracellular chemical contents, such as histamine, serotonin, bradykinin, and hydrogen ions, causing localized inflammation and pain; the response to an injury or infection initiates an orchestrated sequence of events and histochemical changes that begin the healing process (Bracciano, 2007).

There are a variety of theoretical perspectives used to describe or characterize pain with most including the psychological factors of affective, behavioral, cognitive, situational, and sensory-physical (Crook, Milner, Schultz, & Stringer, 2002; Im, 2006). Theoretical perspectives have been categorized as restrictive or comprehensive based on the International Association for the Study of Pain (IASP). These include: gate control, non-radical operant-behavioral, cognitive behavioral, opiate-mediated, and neuromatrix theory. Advances in neuroscience have provided an additional perspective on pain theory and its functional implications critical for the occupational therapist to understand in order to treat patients effectively.

This workshop will provide the occupational therapist with an overview of the biophysiological basis for pain, theoretical approaches to pain, and clinical sequelae of pain. This course will discuss the impact of pain on occupational performance, assessment, and therapeutic approaches and interventions in the treatment of pain, including physical agent modalities, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), micro-current, and complementary approaches.