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Development of a self management programme for people fitted with a splint for osteoarthritis of the thumb

Kerry Sorby¹, Susan Tromans²

¹York St. John University, North Yorkshire, United Kingdom, ²North Kirklees Primary Care Trust, West Yorkshire, United Kingdom

Introduction

The process of developing a self management programme for people fitted with a splint for osteoarthritis of the thumb will be presented: it has been developed by a collaborative team composed of patients, academic and clinical staff.

Objectives:

1. Discuss how the clinical reasoning, evidence base and expertise of patients/clinicians/educators underpinned the design and content of the self-management programme.
2. Present the essential components of the programme

Description

Splinting is a short term invention to manage symptoms of pain, oedema and limited range of movement in patients with osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis causes long term problems for the patient in completing meaningful occupations. This programme aims to enable the patient wearing the splint to make informed decisions about their daily activities and thereby enhance occupational performance

A review of the literature indicates there is limited research available investigating the use of self management programmes for people with osteoarthritis of the hand/thumb. Therefore a research team composed of two patients, two clinicians and two educators saw the need for such a programme.

Discussion

The programme was developed through collaborative planning of the expert patients, clinicians and educators have led to the development programme. Through this process the key components of the programme was identified: this includes the anatomy of the carpometacarpal joint; information about osteoarthritis and how this affects the joint; joint protection strategies and application to the patient's choice of valued occupation.

The next stage of this project will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the self management programme on symptoms, participation and quality of life for people who have been provided with a splint for osteoarthritis of the thumb.

Contribution to the practice and evidence base of the profession

This occupational therapy intervention will shift the locus of control from the therapist to the patient by empowering them to manage their own condition. This will enable patients to make informed decisions about their own care which in turn could have a positive impact on their symptoms, participation in occupations and sense of well being, which are important features of managing long term conditions.