

Arthritis Self-Efficacy Program: Supporting Participation in Social Context

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Introduction: Arthritis is a chronic public health problem and recent trends support the importance of not only medical management, but self-management of the disease to ensure a productive and meaningful quality of life. Nearly two-thirds of those living with arthritis in the US reports that it adversely affects all aspects of life ranging from self-care to social participation (CDC, 2007). The Arthritis Self-Help Curriculum developed by the American Arthritis Foundation purports to increase self-efficacy behavior in persons with arthritis and positively impacts pain, energy level, and self-care. While research is readily available on these programs and effects on self-care, it is considerably limited when investigating the effects of such programs on social participation. **Objective:** The objective of this research was to determine the impact of the Arthritis Self-Help Curriculum on self-efficacy behavior as it relates to engagement in social participation and the development of social roles in persons with arthritis. **Methods:** Using an A-B-A descriptive research design, twelve participants consisting of males and females, age 50 years or older, participated in Arthritis Self-Help curriculum for six weeks. The Stanford Arthritis Self-Efficacy Scale, the Energy/Fatigue Scale, the Social/Role Activities Limitation Scale, and the Short Form (SF) 36 Mental Status Scale were administered as pre-tests, post-tests and follow-up tests one month after the intervention. **Results** indicate that the recipients' showed improved regulations of their daily activities, increased participation in social life situations, expanded social roles and behaviors, and greater symptom management. **Conclusion:** The program supports the literature that guided self-help curriculums positively influences self-efficacy behaviors. **Implication:** The use of self-help programs may serve as a viable therapeutic venue and client-centered educational methodology in occupational therapy. As wellness programs continue to emerge in practice, the focus on the role of a client becoming a self manager can be enhanced by the use of self-help programs. Therefore, occupational therapy practitioners may want to consider recommending such programs like the Arthritis Self-Help curriculum as a complement to therapy that could be beneficial to person's in managing a disease process.