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EFFICACY OF AN OCCUPATIONAL TIME USE INTERVENTION FOR PEOPLE WITH SERIOUS MENTAL ILLNESS

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Introduction: To date, few evidence-based interventions explicitly focus on assertively addressing the occupational needs of individuals with serious mental illness whose community lives are characterized by pervasive lack of involvement in personally and socially meaningful activities. A new occupational time use intervention, tentatively titled "Action over Inertia," was created by Canadian occupational therapists to positively influence occupational balance and engagement of these individuals.

Objectives: This paper will present research evaluating the effectiveness and clinical utility of an intervention to improve the occupational balance and engagement of individuals with serious mental illness who experience pervasive disconnection from meaningful occupation.

Methods: A prospective, multi-centre randomized controlled trial of the intervention was conducted. In addition to receiving standard community mental health care, 10 individuals took part in the 12 week intervention, delivered by an occupational therapist. The control group (n=8) received standard care. Pre and post intervention measures of time use and occupational engagement were completed. Questionnaires regarding clinical utility were also completed.

The intervention is delivered as an individualized workbook and promotes collaboration between therapist and client. The intervention focuses on: securing investment in change; reflection on current occupational patterns; rapid introduction of and support for meaningful activities; education about the relationship between serious mental illness and occupation; long-term goal planning and support; and ongoing refinement of plans.

Results: At the completion of the pilot study, time use shifted away from sleep to increased general activity in the treatment group ($p=0.05$). Treatment and control groups did not differ on occupational engagement measures after the completion of the trial. Feedback on the clinical utility of the intervention was very positive from both therapists and treatment participants.

Conclusion:

This presentation provides an overview of the Action over Inertia intervention and discusses the results of a randomized controlled trial supporting its effectiveness.

Contribution to practice:

Occupational therapists frequently work with individuals with serious mental illness whose occupational lives are characterized by imbalance and disengagement. This study provides initial evidence of the effectiveness of a new intervention in this area that also appears to have clinical utility.