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Occupation and person centred practice: Outcomes in a group intervention for children with developmental coordination disorder

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Introduction: Occupational therapy for children with developmental coordination disorder (DCD) is changing from impairment-based interventions to occupation and person centred approaches. This study explores a method of implementing occupation, child and family centred practice in a clinical setting.

Objectives: To examine an occupation specific approach for children with DCD using group intervention and concentrated practice schedules.

Methods: The sample consists of seven boys and one girl with DCD, aged 7-11 years. The outcome measures are the Movement Assessment Battery for Children (MABC), the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) with all parents/carers and three children, Harter's Scale of Perceived Competence or Harter and Pike's Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence (Harter's) and clinical observations. The goals/occupations were chosen by the children using the Perceived Efficacy and Goal Setting System and agreed with parents/carers in adherence with person centred practice. The intervention used an occupation specific approach combined with motor learning and cognitive strategies and consisted of eight 50-minute group sessions over a two-week period.

Results: Significant statistical differences were found with MABC, COPM-Performance and satisfaction scores baseline differing from post intervention and follow up ($p < 0.05$). There was no significant difference ($p > 0.05$) between post intervention and follow up for MABC and COPM performance at the 4-6 week follow up. Suggesting that improvements were maintained after 4-6 weeks without any intervention compared to the baseline for MABC and COPM performance ($p > 0.05$) but not COPM satisfaction. There were no changes in Harter's scores. Fifty-six goals were identified with 34 totally met, 12 partially met and 10 unmet demonstrating improved occupational performances in 82% of goals.

Conclusions: Using an occupation and person centred approach can be effective in eliciting positive changes in occupational performance and impaired coordination in children with DCD.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy: This study suggests that goal orientated, occupation specific approaches using concentrated practice schedules and group sessions show potential for being an effective intervention method for occupational therapists.