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Implementing an Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) Program: practical steps in a busy OT Department

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Introduction

Evidence-based practice (EBP) has emerged in the OT literature as the 'Gold Standard' in guiding practice. Despite therapists knowing the importance of integrating research evidence into clinical decision-making, many therapists find it difficult to put this information into practice.

The OT department at Austin Health, a large Hospital in Melbourne, Australia, decided to undertake a program to assist staff to put evidence into practice.

Objectives

- develop a 2-part program of education (Education Series) and practical skill enhancement (Staff Presentations)
- develop a Presentation template
- assist OT's to embrace EBP

Description/Report

Education Series

Monthly, 1-hour presentations involving 'in-house' and 'guest' speakers has encompassed many topics including: literature searches, appraising literature, overcoming barriers to EBP, distinguishing between Quality, EBP and Research, 5 levels of Evidence, Reflective Practice, Clinical Ethics, Qualitative and Quantitative research.

Staff Presentations

An EBP template and guidelines were developed to structure EBP and facilitate succinct presentations.

The template of 9 slides includes: introduction, clinical problem, clinical question, resources, evaluation of the resources, integration of the evidence and an implementation and evaluation plan.

Results/Discussion

A staff questionnaire revealed the program has assisted OT's to:

- become more confident in applying EBP to clinical interventions
- have tangible outcomes (presentations)
- more easily communicate OT interventions with clients and peers as they have the evidence base to support their work

With all staff contributing to this program we now have over 50 presentations and several quality/research projects being undertaken.

Conclusion

The template allows staff to easily reflect on relevant clinical problems and devise an implementation plan. This could involve OT resources supporting current intervention/s, interventions are changed, or in cases of little/no available literature OT's are inspired to undertake research.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

Therapists are encouraged to provide 'evidence-based' practice, this program is a practical way to put evidence into practice, allow reflection and make implementation plans. All OT's at Austin Health and some other Melbourne OT departments have adopted this program.

This program can easily be adapted for individuals, small or large department use. Those attending this presentation will learn how to access a CD developed from this project to assist starting similar programs.