

The effectiveness of group activities due to improvements in the mental and cognitive function in elderly people with dementia; Differences in two groups according to the formation of group work

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【Introduction】

We often conduct group activities for elderly people with dementia in the clinical setting. In the work place, mental function, including the psychological stress, satisfaction, self-efficacy, has been reported to change due to group differences according to the formation of group work. However, no such investigation has ever previously been reported in regard to occupational therapy.

【Objective】

To investigate the effectiveness of group activities due to improvements in the mental and cognitive function of elderly people with dementia, and elucidate any differences in two groups according to the formation of group work.

【Methods】

Twenty elderly people with dementia participated in this study and all subjects gave their informed consent to participate. All individuals were divided into two different groups in the formation of group work, one group consisted of 11 subjects who all worked individually (individual group), another group consisted of 9 subjects who all worked with all the members (allotment group). The subjects of both groups participated in this study for 3 months, working for 1 hour 5 times a week, and also thereafter took part in creative activities, including the making of paper crafts. We evaluated all subjects before and after this program using Hasegawa Dementia Scale Revised (HDS-R), MMSE scale, geriatric depression scale (GDS-15), geriatric self-efficacy scale (GSES), and QOL-D.

【Results】

In both groups, MMSE scale and QOL-D significantly improved, in addition, the HDS-R and GDS-15 score significantly improved in only the allotment group. However, no significant difference was found in comparisons between the two groups.

【Conclusion】

These findings suggest that group activities using our program had a positive effect on both the cognitive function and the QOL in the participants regardless of the difference in the formation of group work for the elderly subjects with dementia.

【Contribution to the practice / evidence base of occupational therapy】

Occupational therapists should address both the mental function as well as the cognitive function when treating elderly people with dementia. These results support the validity of group activities for improving the mental function of elderly subjects with dementia.