

Therapists' perspectives on the use of Talking Mats™ to administer the COPM with individuals who have complex communication needs.

Gail Teachman^{1,2}, Laura Franks¹, Sheri McClement¹, Lily Wainer², Chana Weinberg²
¹*Bloorview Kids Rehab, Toronto, Canada*, ²*University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada*

Introduction: The Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) has gained worldwide acceptance as a clinical and research outcome measure. It uses a semi-structured interview to elicit client perspectives on occupational performance issues. However, the potential to administer the COPM with individuals who are non-speaking or have complex communication needs has not yet been explored. The Talking Mats™ framework uses picture symbols to help people with communication difficulties to express themselves. This study explores therapists' perspectives on the use of Talking Mats™ to administer the COPM with individuals who have complex communication needs. **Objectives:** A protocol incorporating the Talking Mats™ framework was developed to enable occupational therapists to administer the COPM with individuals who have complex communication needs. The experiences of therapists who used this protocol were elicited. **Methods:** Ten therapists used this protocol, participated in focus groups, and completed individual surveys. Therapists were recruited from various practice areas of a regional rehabilitation centre that services children, youth, and young adults. **Results:** Presenters will share emergent themes and quantitative data from the surveys and focus groups, including therapists' input on protocol ease of use, time required for administration, comprehensiveness, value, and overall effectiveness. **Conclusions:** Therapists valued the use of Talking Mats™ to enable administration of the COPM with individuals with complex communication needs. Therapists felt that the framework facilitated client-centered intervention by allowing individuals with communication difficulties to be respondents during the COPM interview. Further research is warranted to gain the client perspective on use of this framework. **Contribution to the practice base of occupational therapy:** Use of Talking Mats™ enables therapists to administer the COPM with individuals whose participation in a semi-structured interview might not otherwise be possible. This presentation raises awareness of the need to seek active participation from individuals with complex communication needs throughout the therapy process. The protocol shared in this presentation offers therapists a means to address this need, and broadens the client group with whom the COPM can be administered.