

Right to Participation in the Meaningful Occupation of Research: with appropriate training, mental health consumers are reliable interviewers

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Introduction: Internationally there is growing recognition of the importance, value and right of consumers to be involved in research. Involving consumers in mental health research is moving from marginal to expected practice and is a requirement of major health research funding bodies. Inclusion and participation in meaningful occupations are central occupational therapy tenets. With the growing acceptance of consumers as the experts in their own recovery, self-report measures to complement those completed by therapists are being created. Many self-report measures are still in development and it is commonly found that administration via interview increases reliability of responses. The growing use of self-report measures heralds an opportunity for consumers to become bona fide research team members. Data collection via interview provides a natural opportunity for consumers to be more actively employed in outcomes oriented research. The unanswered question is whether mental health consumers can reliably collect self-report data via interview.

Objectives: 1. Development of appropriate training modules for mental health consumers 2. To examine inter-interviewer reliability for five consumers collecting data from their peers on two self-report measures.

Methods: Consumer-friendly research training modules were collaboratively developed. Five consumers, trained using these modules, and 1 academic researcher administered 2 self-report measures (Recovery Assessment Scale and Socially Valued Role Classification Scale) via interview. Ten participants were interviewed twice, once by a consumer researcher and once by the academic researcher. Interviews were conducted 2 days apart. Raw data were subjected to Rasch analysis to obtain interval level scores. Scores, plus and minus error estimates, were plotted for visual inspection of overlap between results attained by each interviewer for the same subject. Intra-class correlations were also calculated.

Results: Overlapping error bands for 90% of measure pairs and high classical analysis ICC scores (> .89) were found for both measures.

Conclusions: This study suggests that mental health consumers, with appropriate training can perform the role of interviewer, collecting self-report data with high inter-interviewer reliability.

Contribution: provision of evidence and a training method to enhance occupational therapy research practice; specifically training, empowerment and inclusion of consumers in the meaningful occupation of research