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Managing impact: Occupational therapist as case manager in FASD prevention

Lizahn Cloete

Stellenbosch University, Cape Town, South Africa

Introduction: Binge drinking during pregnancy among women who live in marginalised communities results in Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs). Within school settings undiagnosed learners who experience learning and behavioural difficulties are often misunderstood and mistreated by co-learners and educators. An occupation-based approach may ensure participation in learning and socializing -occupations for affected learners.

Methods: An occupational therapy case management approach was used to design a school based intervention for a learner who experienced learning and behavioural difficulties as a result of prenatal alcohol exposure. Findings derived from a collective case study (as baseline study) and a critical ethnography (as follow up study) was used to design the intervention.

Objectives: To explore appropriate occupation-based interventions for learners affected by FASD within the school setting.

To explore case management as an approach for addressing learning and behavioural difficulties of affected learners within in a school setting.

Findings and practice Implications: Screening and diagnostic services for FASD within schools are limited and often unavailable. Learners who are experiencing learning and behavioural difficulties are viewed as non-compliant. Educators feel under-prepared for dealing with behavioural difficulties. Collaboration with parents, educators, psychologists and dysmorphologists offers possibilities for developing a protocol for identifying and supporting affected learners.

Conclusion: Occupational therapist as case manager plays a lead role in networking and collaborating with relevant role players within and beyond the education sector. Occupation-based practice may lessen the impact of FASD on learning and socializing opportunities for learners affected by FASD.