

A Pilot Survey to Identify Demographic Factors Affecting Occupational Therapists' Willingness to Address Sexuality as an ADL

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Abstract

For many people, sexuality may be a delicate topic, but it is a meaningful activity. Our aim was to better understand why occupational therapists (OTs) are not addressing sexuality as an ADL with their clients. To accomplish our objective, we created a survey by methodically selecting demographic identifiers and devising questions based on clinical reasoning through discussions with our faculty advisor. To create the best possible survey tool, we piloted the survey to SUNY Downstate occupational therapy faculty and clinical fieldwork instructors affiliated with SUNY Downstate OT program. Feedback from the piloted survey served as a baseline for refining practitioner demographic identifiers and question requirements. Moreover, the data gathered through this pilot survey was used to create a final survey tool. We are optimistic that the information obtained through use of the final survey tool will eventually assist educators, potential OTs and practicing OTs to better

Methodology

Participants: Participants were recruited through the SUNY Downstate's Master of Science Occupational Therapy program's clinical instructor registry due to their high response rate in the past and easy access to their email addresses. Thus systematic sampling was used to find the sample we focused on.

Procedure: The survey instrument design was cross sectional for this study. It was sent out via secure email delivery to all of the participants at the same time. Follow up secured email deliveries were sent out to all participants after two weeks. The information was then collected and coded using a Microsoft excel spreadsheet as it was a cost effective method. Also, it was easily linked to the secured emailed survey instruments that were sent out. The questions in the survey instrument focused on the demographic information of the therapists and their history and comfort level with addressing sexuality as an ADL with their clientele.

Findings

Prominent Demographic Factors that Affected OTs Comfort Level when Addressing Sexuality as and ADL

Sexual orientation, Therapist.	23.1% of the female OTs surveyed felt "not so comfortable" or "not at all" comfortable addressing sexuality in general and 100% of the male OTs felt very comfortable or comfortable addressing sexuality.
Sexual Orientation, Client.	7.7% of the female OTs surveyed felt, "a very little amount" of comfort and 20% of male OTs felt, "not at all" comfortable addressing sexuality with a client who displays a different sexuality orientation than themselves.
Religious Background, Client.	15.4% of the female OTs surveyed felt, "a very little amount" of comfort and 20% of the male OTs felt, "not at all" comfortable addressing sexuality with a client who holds differing religious beliefs.
Religious Background, Therapist.	20% of male and 23.1% of female OTs felt that their own religious beliefs affected their willingness to address sexuality with a client, "a major amount"
Sexual Identity, Client.	23.1% of the female OTs surveyed felt, "a very little amount" of comfort and 20% of the male OTs felt, "a very little amount" of comfort in addressing sexuality with a client who demonstrated a differing sexual identity in relation to their sexuality.

Discussion

It is important to determine how the ADL of sexual activity is currently addressed in occupational therapy professional practice settings, as there is a limited amount of information on the influence of therapist demographics on addressing the ADL. Formulating the problem to be studied provided the starting point for developing the questionnaire.

While no clear correlations were drawn from the results of the pilot survey tool, the findings identified clear demographic indicators as to why sexuality may not be brought up during occupational therapy sessions.

Implications for future research

Creation of a refined survey instrument that focuses on identifying demographic factors of practicing OTs and clients that affect their willingness or lack thereof, to address sexuality with their clientele.

Once identified, this information could be further analyzed and addressed both in higher education and continuing education.