



The Implementation of Occupational Therapy on Multidisciplinary Teams for Treatment of Postpartum Depression

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Introduction

- Postpartum depression (PPD) is a treatable mood disorder associated with feelings of sadness, anxiety, and other hormonal fluctuations (American Psychiatric Association, n.d.).
- Worldwide one in eight women and children will experience the effects of PPD (Fitelson et al., 2011).
- PPD can influence a woman's satisfaction or dissatisfaction with her occupational performance in various areas during the transition through motherhood (Provident, 2024).
- Transitional periods throughout the lifespan, including motherhood can disrupt routine, alter roles and influence participation and performance of valued occupations. Occupational therapists have the skills and knowledge to address challenges of PPD mothers hindering engagement in occupations (Barbic et al., 2021).
- Slootjes et al. (2016) suggests there is value in the role of occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) for women's health during the prenatal and postnatal stages, however, there is inadequate exploration of that care.
- This project explores the role of OTPs in providing postpartum education and treatment for mothers experiencing or at risk for PPD.

Methods

- An occupational therapy (OT) focused educational presentation was implemented at a pediatric primary care (PCP) office in the Birmingham, AL area.
- Potential participants were recruited via posted flyer at the PCP office and via snowball sampling.
- A draft of the educational presentation was provided to the healthcare professionals at the PCP office for feedback to improve quality of presentation prior to launching the educational program.
- Based on feedback, the presentation was revised and more evidence-based research was included in the final presentation.
- The final educational program presented to post-partum mothers included information on:
 - The role of OT in addressing prevention of PPD in mothers
 - PPD signs/symptoms, diagnosis and treatment options
 - OT specific skilled interventions for women experiencing PPD
 - The importance of seeking treatment
- Potential participants were asked to complete a pre-survey and participants who met inclusion criteria were invited to participate in the educational presentation. After the presentation, they were asked to complete a post survey.
 - The pre survey asked participants to evaluate their knowledge of OT and their confidence in identifying PPD symptoms on a 1-10 rating scale. Additionally, participants were asked to share any topics related to postpartum that they wanted to know more about.
 - The post survey reevaluated participants' knowledge of OT, their confidence in identifying PPD symptoms and their perception of the importance and satisfaction of information included in the presentation.

Results

Participants:

- All participants (N=34) were women 0-3 years postpartum who completed the presurvey, educational presentation and post survey in its entirety.
- **Pre survey:** 38 women completed the presurvey and participated in educational presentation
- **Post survey:** 35 women completed the post survey; 1 individual verbally removed consent following participation in the post survey (totaling 34 participants)

- Post survey results indicated an increase in OT knowledge and confidence in identifying PPD symptoms following the educational presentation.
- Participants reported the information in the presentation to be of a high level of importance for postpartum mothers.
- Most participants expressed the educational presentation met their needs and expectations.
- Mothers identified 4 topics of importance in the postpartum stage:
 1. Identifying PPD symptoms
 2. The role of OT supporting mothers
 3. General awareness and resources
 4. Guidance and support with returning to work



Figure 1: Changes in knowledge between pre and post survey.

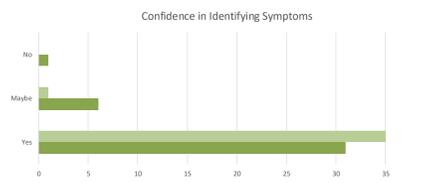


Figure 3: Changes in confidence in identifying symptoms between pre and post survey.

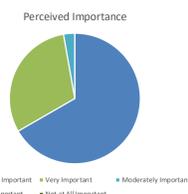


Figure 2: Perceived importance of educational presentation.

Discussion

Principle Findings:

- The presentation was beneficial for postpartum mothers in increasing their overall understanding of the OT profession and their skills as it relates to PPD and postpartum women at risk for PPD.
- An indicated increase in PPD knowledge and awareness of PPD symptoms following the session.
- PPD education and the role of OT in treatment is important and needed for the postpartum population.
- The findings support the exploration of the role of OTs in skilled interventions towards treatment for PPD while identifying areas of occupation that are important to the population during the postpartum stage.
- Top identified topics from postpartum mothers correlate with the review by Barbic et al (2021) identifying three components for OTs treating PPD: (a) supporting occupational disruption and transitions, (b) managing the experience of motherhood in the context of depression, and (c) value added of occupational therapy to current PPD best practices" (p. e249).

Discussion continued

Limitations & Areas of Improvement

- **Sample Size:** There was a small sample size of participants; the findings cannot be generalized.
- **Time Constraints:** Because the educational presentation was conducted during pediatric visits, time constraints were a limitation. Some participants felt rushed while some mothers weren't interested at all.
- **Survey Design:** There could have been more survey questions geared towards assessing current PPD education and needs of the population for more in-depth results.
- **Participant Satisfaction:** While most mothers reported satisfaction with the educational presentation, a small subgroup of participants reported it did not meet their needs and/or satisfaction.

Conclusion

- This project highlights the need for an increase in OT and PPD education for postpartum mothers as they are lacking needed support, education and resources.
- The findings highlight the critical role of OTs in addressing occupational disruption, managing transitions and the impact of skilled interventions.
- Including OT services for treatment of PPD on interdisciplinary teams can be beneficial in assisting postpartum mothers with engagement in valued occupations, managing symptoms and in addressing unmet needs of parents during the postpartum stage.
- As mothers are lacking support during this pivotal transition increasing knowledge and providing resources can decrease the prevalence of untreated PPD and provide various treatment options to the postpartum population.

References

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