“I don’t have a magic wand”: Occupational therapists’ perspectives on why and how they engage in patient education

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Purpose

● Patient education is a teaching and learning process involving both the healthcare provider and patient in a clinical setting.
● While patient education is often identified as an intervention in healthcare research, it is rarely directly studied in occupational therapy.
● Due to a rise in chronic health conditions and rapid discharge from acute facilities, there is an increased need for self-management.
● Incorporating patient education into treatment in the outpatient setting has become vital to successful recovery.

The present qualitative study examines occupational therapists’ perspectives to understand the purpose (why) and the process (how) of engaging in patient education in outpatient rehabilitation.

Methods

● Participants
  o Four occupational therapists, ages 31-41 (3 female, 1 male)
  o Purposively sampled from a rehabilitation network
  o Registered and/or licensed as an occupational therapist in the United States for at least one year
  o Participated in direct clinical care for a minimum average of 20 hours/week over the past year
● Procedures
  o Responsive semi-structured interviews using Skype video calling
  o Audio and video recording
  o Verbatim transcription of recordings
  o Reflective memos
● Data Analysis
  o Thematic analysis using open hierarchical coding
  o Themes identified and linked to broader themes to reach a central category
  o Visual diagramming for reflection on themes and their relationships
  o Group discussion for interpretive consensus and trustworthiness

Results

The Purpose or the Why

“I’m gonna educate you on why this is important for what we’re doing so that you have a better buy-in.” (Mia)

“They have to have an active role. It’s their recovery. If they don’t have an active role then they are not going to recover. You want them to have that desire to learn and to get better and to be aware of what is going on.” (Sarah)

The Process or the How

“A patient’s life and their attitude can make a big difference in their recovery...if I find a patient that is very down on themselves or a patient that feels like they’re not going to get better, that’s a patient that I have to educate differently than somebody that’s very motivated...So that’s definitely how I tailor my treatment. You have to be able to read people.” (Jessica)

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References