Health and Wellness Using Occupations to Explore Internal Motivators for Change

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**BACKGROUND**

The number of Americans living with Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) is expected to grow up to 16 million by 2050 (Smallfield & Heckenlaible, 2017). The risk for developing it could be reduced through lifestyle modifications (Hussenoeder & Riedel-Heller, 2018). Using occupation as a means for health promotion and disease prevention is an emerging area for occupational therapy practice (AOTA, 2014).

**PROBLEM**

Occupational therapy’s role in prevention is not widely recognized. As a profession they have potential to bring awareness and a plan of action towards health promotion before an onset develops (Burson et al., 2010).

**PURPOSE**

This capstone sought to increase awareness of internal motivators which could help foster healthy behaviors integrated into lifestyle to potentially assist in reducing the risk of Alzheimer’s disease (AD).

**METHODS**

A needs assessment was conducted to understand current lifestyle patterns and one’s perceptions on their quality of life across the lifespan of adults who do not have a diagnosis of AD.

- Anonymous online survey
- Observation of a current healthy living program at the Alzheimer’s Association
- Collaborative presentation with Alzheimer’s Association on their healthy living program
- An interactive occupation-focused PowerPoint based on findings from the survey

**RESULTS**

Survey Findings in Relation to AD (n=40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young Adults (18-39)</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle-aged Adults (40-59)</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Adults (60+)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family History of AD</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concern for Developing AD

- Yes: 94%
- No: 6%

**DISCUSSION**

Implications for Occupational Therapy

Future steps for this program could include programming which could be specific to common occupations that surround a particular age group to motivate and enable health-promoting change. Collaboration with community organizations will seek to raise awareness on occupational therapy’s role on prevention. The interactive occupation-focused component of the program will continue with Alzheimer’s Association.

**CONCLUSION**

This capstone contributed to the emerging area of AD prevention for occupational therapy. Participants were encouraged to consider the long-term implications of their current lifestyle and make adaptations as necessary to have a more favorable health outlook while being engaged in meaningful activities which lead to a purposeful life.

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