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Enhancing Eating Routines to Support Occupational Functioning

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Background

Eating routines are food-based activities and behaviors that occur daily across the lifespan (Green et al., 2021). Eating habits have become more recognized as a modifiable risk factor for worsening mental health symptoms (Godos, et al., 2020). Addressing eating routines shows promising benefits for the prevention and treatment of mental health disorders (Godos et al., 2020). Occupational therapists have the skills and abilities to implement holistic interventions to address eating routines and assist individuals in developing skills that aid in the prevention and treatment of chronic mental illness (AOTA, 2015).

Problem

Research shows a gap in graduating OT students and the comfortability of addressing eating routines, even though OTs are being called upon to address eating in various settings, including mental health. (Wingo et al., 2018). Moreover, challenges with eating routines are prevalent in individuals in the earlier stages of mental illness (Teasdale et al., 2020).

Purpose

To improve health literacy in individuals impacted by mental health concerns and explore OTs role in providing interventions to address eating routines in the mental health setting.

Purpose

Outcome Objectives:

1. Assess occupational therapy's role and integrate theoretical frameworks for building healthy eating routines in the mental health setting.
2. Design an educational program to promote health literacy by addressing eating habits through a Lifestyle Redesign® informed approach for individuals impacted by mental health concerns.

Methods

A needs assessment was conducted via survey of participants 16 years or older in the Kickstart Program. Questions were assessing current eating habits, attitudes and behaviors around food. 15 responses were analyzed. Observational data from meetings and client sessions/caregiver report at the Kickstart program were collected over a six-week period to further assess need. Two interviews were conducted to gather data on different interdisciplinary perspectives of current eating routine challenges and supports.

Overall need assessment:

- 15 survey responses over two week
- Observational data over 6 weeks
- Two interviews, interdisciplinary view

Needs assessment concluded Kickstart participants can benefit from OT interventions for addressing eating habits and routines. Clients reported they felt they needed to work on their eating routines.

Program

Program Overview:

Eating for Occupation is a program for enhancing eating routines to support occupational functioning through education and skill building in an effort promote the well being of individuals impacted by mental health concerns.

Program Goals:

1. Accessible health literacy that addresses eating routines with an OT lens
2. Promote healthy eating habits by providing education and skill building activities

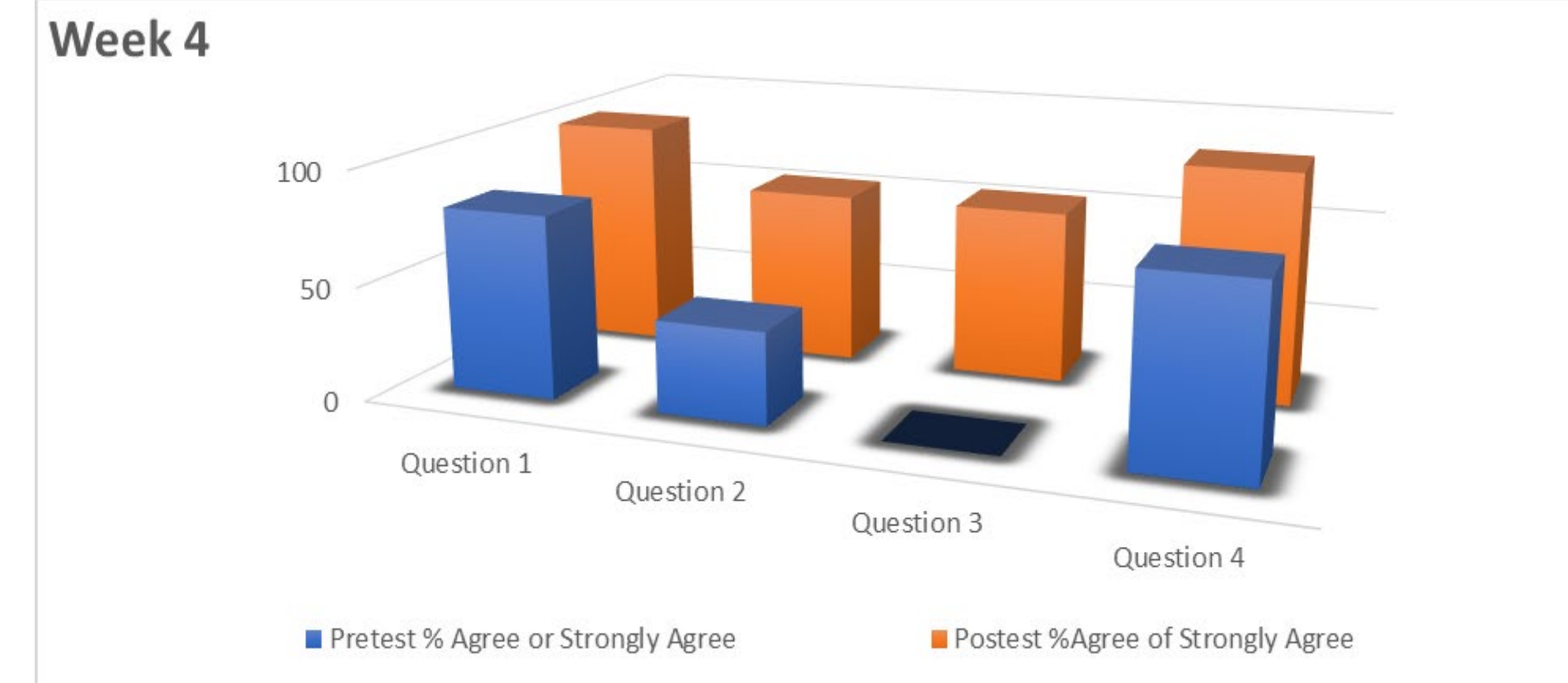
Program Structure:

4 Week Program	Virtual and face to face groups b. Skill building and activity focused c. Pre and Post Tests
1:1 sessions	a. Evaluation of current eating routines b. Personalized interventions c. Addressing perceived benefit and barriers to healthy eating d. Qualitative observation data

Theoretical Frameworks:

1. Lifestyle Redesign
2. Social Ecological Model
3. Health Belief Model
4. Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change

Outcomes:



Outcomes measured with Pre and Post Tests at the start and end of each group session for 4 weeks. Client reports also recorded for 1:1 sessions.

1. Increased health literacy
2. Improved confidence in cooking, meal planning, and meal preparation skills.

Assessment:

Informal Initial evaluation of Eating Routines

- Self Identified Goals
- Modified Occupational Performance of Food Measure (OPFM)
- Eating Behaviors & Patterns Questionnaire

Interventions:

General health education; food and mood logging; cooking skills, food handling skills; cooking safety; food exploration; meal preparation; meal planning; self-motivation; mindful eating practice; emotional eating

OT Implications

Occupational Therapists have the skills and abilities to increase health literacy in mental health settings through assessment and interventions. OT's role can expand in this area of practice. Separate from dietetics and nutritionists, OTs can use theories and practice frameworks when developing sustainable and meaningful eating routines that are unique and individualized to clients needs. Group sessions and individualized session are both effective ways for OTs to address improving eating routines for individuals 16 to 25 with a mental health diagnosis.

References:

