Increasing Engagement in the Occupation of Camping for Older Adults

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Increasing Engagement in the Occupation of Camping for Older Adults
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BACKGROUND
Research on older adults and leisure pursuits has identified a decrease in active leisure activities after 75 (Lawton, 2002). As people age, they participate in outdoor recreation less often, especially if the activity is physically demanding (Colley et al., 2019). Adults over 60 make up 20% of the general population but only 4% of greenspace users, reporting lower amounts of outdoor recreation in greenspaces than younger people (Cohen et al., 2016).

METHODS
Participants
Participants were recruited using word of mouth and snowball sampling online through:
• Facebook groups focused on camping and national park use
• Sisters on the Fly camping group
• San Marcos Senior Center

Surveys & Interviews
The survey was administered using Google Forms. The survey consisted of 20 short answer questions that developed quantitative and qualitative data. Participants were given the opportunity to participate in an additional semi-structured virtual interview which consisted of questions related to camping and outdoor recreation. Interviews were conducted over the phone, Facetime, and Zoom.
- 64 Survey Responses
- 19 Virtual Interviews

Transcription and Analysis
Interviews were not recorded but notes were taken using the voice typing tool on Google Docs. Transcripts were analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s six phases of thematic analysis an inductive approach to code data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

RESULTS
The planned in-person camping for older adults program was modified to be administered online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Camp-OT.com website was developed to share the research with a large audience and be updated as continued research is developed. The pages within the website include information on occupational therapy (OT) in nature and outdoor recreation, activity adaptations or adaptive equipment for older adults participating in camping, planning skills, and a review of the research and literature. The target audience is adults over 65 interested in the occupation of camping, OT or OT students looking to further the research on outdoor recreation and OT or to gain insight on the benefits of camping for older adults and OT implemented in a nature environment.

Dissemination: The results of this study were shared utilizing an online infographic with the Sisters on the Fly women’s camping group (shown in Results column). The infographic included results on accommodation changes, who participants camp with, and common strengths and challenges reported by members.

OT Impact: Utilizing EHP and MOHO, this capstone project helped to outline how OTs can approach nature occupations such as camping. Camping and outdoor recreation activities can become a useful resource for occupational therapy interventions if determined to be meaningful to the client.