

4-15-2021

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Recommended Citation

Nguyenly, A., MacDermott, S., Park, K., & Cohill, B. (2021, April 15). The Benefits of an Educational Resource for Swim Instructors to Promote Inclusive Swimming. Poster presented at the Virtual OTD Capstone Symposium, University of St Augustine for Health Sciences. Retrieved from <https://soar.usa.edu/otdcapstonesspring2021/5>

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The Benefits of an Educational Resource for Swim Instructors to Promote Inclusive Swimming

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BACKGROUND

Swimming has the potential to positively impact an individual's physical and mental health, fitness, participation in leisure and social activities, as well as overall function (Kelly & Darrah, 2005; Miller, 2007). Occupational therapists (OTs) have the training and knowledge to support, challenge, and modify activities or parts of activities that are important and meaningful to individuals (such as swimming). OTs can use an aquatic environment to maximize an individuals' participation and their ability to achieve their goals, such as health and wellness, land-based activity performance, and/or leisure and social participation (Franken et al., 2013). OTs are prepared to encompass other components like leisure and social participation during swimming to increase health and wellness. Applying an occupational therapy approach to support and meet the needs identified by swim instructors to be better prepared to teach swim lessons to individuals with disabilities may promote inclusive swimming programs.

PROBLEM

Individuals with disabilities may require modified or specialized swim lessons based on their needs and abilities. Many such individuals may not receive adapted or specialized lessons because the facility does not provide the necessary training and resources for their swim instructors.

PURPOSE

To develop an educational resource for swim instructors to better interact with individuals with disabilities before, during, and after swim lessons.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Qualitative research study to determine the effectiveness and usefulness of an educational resource for swim instructors.
- Conduct a needs assessment of swim instructors' knowledge of adaptations and needs of swimmers with disabilities.
- Learn research skills to further knowledge and enhance ability to implement study on swimming for individuals with disabilities.
- Develop a detailed educational resource with education and adaptations for swim instructors.

METHODS

- IRB EXEMPT Protocol approval.
- Conducted a qualitative research study using a pre- and post survey to collect data.
- Participants were recruited through social media platforms, email, and word of mouth.
- Participants included swim instructors, aquatic coaches, aquatic volunteers, and anyone interested in teaching individuals with disabilities to swim.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE

The pre-survey affirmed assumptions of the needs of swim instructors to provide education of specific conditions, tools, resources, adaptations, and support to promote inclusivity in swimming and swim programs.



CONCLUSION

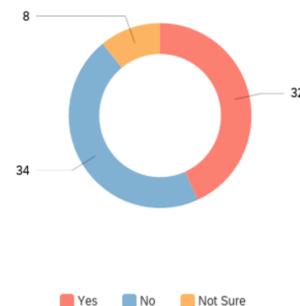
Findings support the literature that there is a lack of instructor training and preparedness to teach inclusive lessons. In the future, educational resources and in-person, hands-on, in-water trainings can be provided with the information in the educational resource. OTs have the potential to enhance the abilities of swim instructors by providing current education on conditions, resources, and adaptations based on individual needs, further explore the impact of swimming in other land-based activities, and influence interests in other adaptive and aquatic sports and activities.

DISSEMINATION

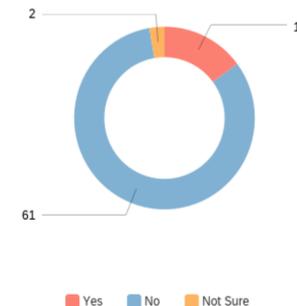
- The findings indicate that participants lack formal training, knowledge, and resources to teach individuals with disabilities.
- Findings also found that participants would like to gain knowledge of conditions, resources, skills and modifications to be more confident in teaching inclusive swim lessons.
- OTs can assist in providing education on conditions, resources, and adaptations to provide inclusive and appropriate swim lessons for individuals with disabilities.
- From these findings, it is important to educate swim instructors to promote inclusive swimming.

RESULTS

Does your current/former workplace have an adaptive or inclusive swimming program?

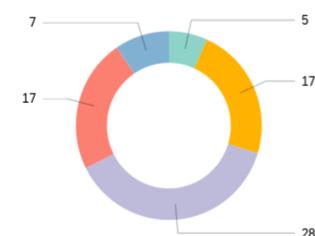


Did you receive any formal training on working with individuals with disabilities in an aquatic setting?

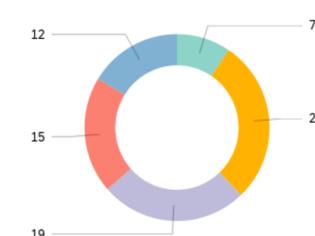


Rating of preparedness, confidence, and comfortability:

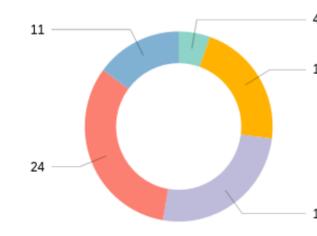
How prepared do you feel with the training, resources, and knowledge you currently have to teaching individuals with disabilities?



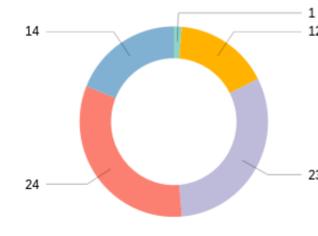
How confident do you feel in determining what resources and equipment to use with different individuals?



How confident do you feel making adaptations/modifications to teach swim lessons to individuals with disabilities?



How comfortable do you feel teaching swim lessons to individuals with disabilities?



1-Not at All 2-Slightly 3-Neutral 4-Very 5-Extremely

