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An Occupational Therapist Role in Mental Health: Focus in Schizophrenia and Eating Disorders

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BACKGROUND

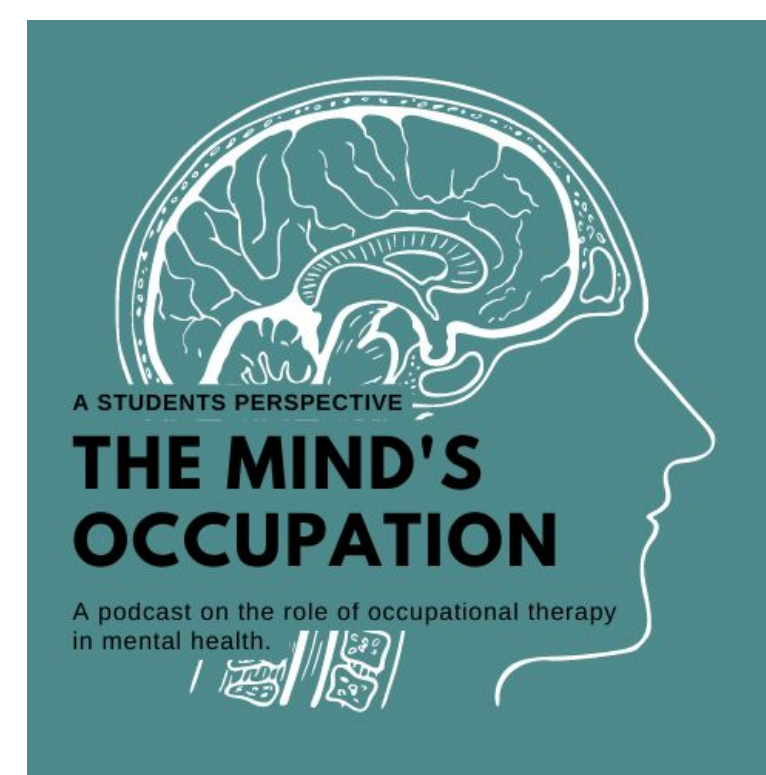
- Schizophrenia is "a mental disorder characterized by disruptions in thought processes, perceptions, emotional responsiveness, and social interactions" (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], n.d).
- Anorexia Nervosa is characterized by "restricted eating, extreme thinness, fear of weight gain, distorted body image, and self-esteem" (NMH, n.d).
- Binge-Eating disorder is characterized by eating large amounts of food in two hours; eating even when full or not hungry; eating alone; feelings of distress or shame; and frequently dieting without weight loss (NIMH, n.d).
- OT has a prevalent history in mental health, but through deinitialization, lack of reimbursement avenues, and education, there has been a dramatic shift away from being involved in mental health (Mariana et al., 2010, p. 660).
- There is a global mental health crisis, and occupational therapists can help address mental health needs (Costanzo, 2022).

PROBLEM

The role of occupational therapists is not well outlined within the state and federal legislature. This lack of specificity has caused a decrease in occupational therapists within the mental healthcare field, leading to a gap in the care of those with mental health disorders and the education of professionals on the benefits of occupational therapists in this scope.

PURPOSE

This project aimed to disseminate education to occupational therapists, other healthcare professionals, and local governing agencies about how occupational therapists can provide care to adolescents with schizophrenia and eating disorders.



PROJECT

Observation

- Clinical observation was utilized at Avita Community Partners in Cumming, Georgia. Here the OTD student observed a group for mental health led by a peer leader.
- The student observed many topics, including emotions, coping skills, self-confidence, stigma, and different disorders and symptoms, including hallucinations and delusions.
- 120 hours were completed through observation at the clinical site.

Podcast: The Mind's Occupation

- A podcast was created to help disseminate education to other occupational therapists, healthcare professionals, and interested individuals.
- The format was a monologue style where the OTD student scripted the episode, recorded it, edited audio, and published it on podcasting sites, Anchor and Spotify.
- Topics included
 - History of OT in mental health
 - Occupations, client factors, skills, and symptoms of Schizophrenia
 - Treatment of Schizophrenia
 - Occupations, client factors, skills, and symptoms of eating disorders
 - Treatment of eating disorders
 - Roles of an interdisciplinary mental healthcare team
 - Stigma
 - The mental health crisis in America
 - TBI and how it correlates to Schizophrenia
 - Frames of references with eating disorders
 - The spectrum of Schizophrenia

Instagram: Mentally_OT

- An Instagram was created to provide education to followers and advertise the podcast.
- Topics addressed the capstone objectives and supplemental information about schizophrenia and eating disorders.

