

Evidence-based clinical assessment - evaluating, selecting and using clinical assessments in paediatric occupational therapy: an organisational approach to quality, translation and implementation

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Abstract

Background

Allied health care practitioners recognize the importance of selecting the highest quality assessments to best appraise a person's functional capacity, predict recovery, formulate interventions and evaluate outcomes. This paper describes a sustainable, organisationally based Evidence-Based Clinical Assessment (EBCA) project that critically evaluates the quality, applicability and clinical utility of selected assessments used in a tertiary paediatric occupational therapy service.

Methods

Using a uniform approach, the metric properties including validity, reliability, responsiveness and clinical utility of selected paediatric Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments from the areas of acquired brain injury/neurology, burns, hand and upper limb, oncology, spinal, infants and neonates, were systematically evaluated. Three groups participated in the EBCA project - managers providing organisational expertise and leadership; clinicians and students - selecting, reviewing, and using assessments; and researchers - evaluating assessments using expertise in metric properties. Assessments, following endorsement by joint consensus within the groups, would be included in the official clinical guidelines and translated into practice.

Results

Eleven (11) assessments used in OT were rigorously evaluated. Of these 5 were designed to evaluate; 3 to describe, and 3 to plan treatment. Of the 11, 9 were endorsed for use; 1 was not endorsed and 1 remained under consideration. These findings were included in the OT Department's clinical pathways documents and their use applied in practice.

Discussion

Critical factors in the success of the EBCA project included providing dedicated researcher time and skills for the project; formally engaging managers, clinicians and researchers in a sustainable systematic, consensus organisational approach. Translating the findings into established clinical pathways to improve service quality. The results of this preliminary project suggest that an organisational approach is viable and is potentially useful for adoption and implementation by other allied health disciplines.

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