

Sensory based interventions: Allied health leadership and clinical expertise guided organisational inter-disciplinary practice and promoted allied health discipline specific skills.

Heather Davey¹, Elizabeth Scutt²

1 Monash Health, 246 Clayton Rd, Clayton, Victoria, 3168, heather.davey@monashhealth.org

2 Monash Health, 246 Clayton Rd Clayton, Victoria, 3168

Background: Focus on sensory based interventions (SBI) by nursing and other clinicians in mental health care has increased as alternative ways to reduce seclusion and restraint, utilise trauma informed practices and promote client centred care are explored. An organisational procedure to guide the safe and appropriate use of SBI had not been developed due to their previous use within discrete areas of occupational therapy practice, aged and palliative care. Mental health managers and clinicians expressed confusion and discomfort utilising sensory based interventions without clear guidelines to support their practice.

Methods: Allied health leadership provided initial scoping of current practice and identification of the disciplines utilising SBI across Monash Health. Difficulties understanding and comparing different theories of SBI emerged from the nursing and allied health clinicians and leaders collaborating during the scoping project. Occupational therapy expertise was offered to clarify terminology and evaluate the evidence base of SBI in order to develop an organisational wide procedure.

Results: The Discipline Seniors for occupational therapy in mental health created a model to assist in defining SBI terms, theory and interventions. Occupational therapy leadership in SBI was welcomed by nursing and other allied health leaders. Consequently occupational therapists defined areas of practice and identified SBI training needs for clinicians.

Discussion: Occupational therapy is a small profession within acute health care and can lack recognition for areas of particular clinical expertise or have the authority to change clinical practices. Advocating for, and accepting opportunities to demonstrate clinical leadership can focus organisational attention to allied health discipline specific skills and protect the discipline's involvement in selected areas of practice.

Leading the development of a SBI procedure, provided opportunity for occupational therapists to identify and promote their clinical skills and influence clinical practice across a large health organisation.