A Montessori-Based Approach in Occupational Therapy for Persons with Dementia

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BACKGROUND

- Dementia is characterized by a “deterioration in memory, thinking, behavior, and ability to perform everyday activities” (WHO, 2019, para. 1).
- Worldwide, 30 million people are diagnosed with dementia. Approximately 5 to 8 out of 100 people have dementia (WHO, 2019).
- The goal of occupational therapy for persons with dementia is to maximize participation in valued occupations to promote health, well-being, and quality of life (Schafer, 2011).
- A common barrier in dementia care and occupational therapy for persons with dementia is disengagement from the environment (Camp, 1999).
- The culture of dementia care emphasizes deficits associated with dementia while disregarding the remaining capabilities, which further reinforces disengagement (Malone & Camp, 2007).
- The Montessori method of education was developed to create a quality environment that addresses the needs of children labeled ‘unteachable’ (Malone & Camp, 2007).
- Montessori-based approach for persons with dementia focuses on the creation of a supportive environment and places an emphasis on the client’s strengths, capabilities, needs, and interests to facilitate engagement in meaningful activities (Elliot, 2007).
- Effects of the Montessori-based approach among persons with dementia includes improved affect, enhanced constructive engagement, and reduced passive engagement (Groulx, Robichaud, & Paradis, 2010; Lin et al., 2009; Skrjane, Malone, Camp, McGowan, & Gorzelle, 2000; Orsulic-Jeras, Schneider, & Camp, 2000; van der Ploeg et al., 2013).

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

- The Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) addresses the following components: person (votiition, habituation, performance capacity), participation, occupational identity, occupational competency, and occupational adaptation (Kielhofner, 2008).
- The Montessori-based approach in occupational therapy emphasizes the person as outlined by MOHO. Interventions are purposeful and based upon past occupations and interests to establish volition (Camp, 2018; Elliot, 2007). Procedural memory and habitual tasks are commonly preserved in dementia; therefore, using occupations that focus on habits, routines, and roles are effective (Zgola, 1987). It is essential to understand the client’s performance capacity and remaining capacities to maximize success and minimize failure (Camp, 1999; Elliot, 2007).
- The Montessori-based approach in occupational therapy was guided by MOHO, as the developed program aimed to help persons with dementia create an occupational identity and occupational competency resulting in occupational adaptation (Wong & Fisher, 2015).

RESULTS / CONCLUSIONS

- The level of constructive engagement (for more than half the activity) exceeded the level of passive engagement, non-engagement, and other engagement when participating in Montessori-based interventions.
- The perceived satisfaction of all trained professionals remained consistent from pre-test to post-test, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the developed program.
- Competency was achieved by all trained professionals, indicating successful implementation of the program.

REFERENCES