Occupational Therapy & LGBT Health

NM LEND CAPSTONE PROJECT
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SPRING 2017
Outline

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Background and Significance

What is Occupational Therapy?

◦ Uses “occupation” (meaningful activities) as the intervention
  ◦ Underlying philosophy: people are happier and healthier if they’re able to do the things that are important for them to do

◦ For the last 100 years (Happy Birthday, OT!)

(Schell, Scaffa, Gillen, & Cohn, 2014)
Background and Significance

The first OTs worked in mental health hospitals

- People isolated, with nothing to do
- Saw major improvements when OT introduced
- Concept of “occupational deprivation,” versus “occupational enrichment” key for this topic

(Schell, Scaffa, Gillen, & Cohn, 2014)
Background and Significance

LGBT people are exposed to high amounts of harassment, abuse, discrimination...

LGB youth bullied at school 32.3% vs. 16.2% non LGB
LGB youth physically forced to have sex 18.6% vs. 6.1% non LGB
LGBT adults hurt physically by romantic partner 18.9% vs. 7.7% non LGBT
LGBT adults who have experienced discrimination 63%
Transgender people verbally harassed in last year 46%
Transgender people physically assaulted in last year 9%

(Human Rights Campaign, 2015; James, Herman, Keisling, Mottet, & Anafi, 2016; Krehely, 2009; National LGBT Health Education Center, 2015)
Background and Significance

Impact = occupational deprivation

- Depression 57.6% vs. 27.2%
- Suicidality 38.3% vs. 12.7% (attempts requiring medical treatment 11.1% vs. 2.1%)
- Substance use (smoking 34.6% vs. 12.3%; alcohol use 44.6% vs. 27.1%; heroin 15.0% vs. 2.3%)
- LGB youth truancy 14.9% vs. 4.9%
- LGBT seniors have less social support (higher rates of family rejection, lower likelihood to have children)
- LGBT adults have greater rates of unemployment/ poverty
- Homelessness in the last year 12% of transgender people; 40% of homeless youth are LGBT

(James, Herman, Keisling, Mottet, & Anafi, 2016; Krehely, 2009; Movement Advancement Project, 2013; Padilla, 2014)
Background and Significance

LGBT Health Disparities Linked to Stigma and Discrimination

- Family acceptance and support reduces risk of depression, suicide risk, and substance use for LGBT youth (Ryan, 2009)
- State same-sex marriage policies linked to reduced suicide rate among LGB youth (Raifman, Moscoe, Bryn Austin, & McConnell, 2017)
- Gay-Straight Alliances (now commonly referred to in schools as Genders & Sexualities Alliances) linked with lower levels of school-based victimization (Marx, & Kettrey, 2016)
Description of Project

“The Network for LGBT Concerns in OT”

- Only national organization of OT practitioners/ students committed to LGBT health
- Historically has been a social networking group
- No existing resources currently
- Members have expressed a desire in having these resources
Description of Project

Capstone Project:
◦ Create resources about OT’s role in addressing specific healthcare needs of different populations in the LGBT community: fact sheets, and conversion therapy document

Practical implications:
◦ Will be posted on The Network’s website
◦ Centralized resources for:
  ◦ OTs/ OTAs
  ◦ Consumers and community members
  ◦ Other clinicians
  ◦ Students
◦ Foster cohesion and collaboration among OT practitioners/ students
◦ Timely topic for the profession
Description of Project

- Scholarly aspects of this project
  - Research on healthcare needs of LGBT community
  - Research on OT’s role in helping address those needs
  - Attend trainings and presentations on related topics
  - Creating resource material to be shared nationally
  - Collaborate with others
  - Hands on volunteer experience in the community

- HRPO/IRB process not needed
  - No human participants
Description of Project

Relevance to LEND:

- Health policy
- Advocacy
- Emphasize reducing social health disparities
- Creating healthy spaces for all individuals in all environments
  - Children we encounter might identify as LGBT, or grow up to identify that way
  - Parents of children we encounter might identify as LGBT
  - Our colleagues/ friends might identify as LGBT
- Any of us might identify as LGBT
Research Question (fact sheets)

What is the distinct value of occupational therapy when addressing the unique healthcare needs of

- Transgender adults?
- LGBT seniors?
- LGBT youth?
Research Question (fact sheets)

Fact sheets will be shared online at the Network’s main website and Facebook page:

- http://www.otnetwork.org/
- https://www.facebook.com/groups/1636862396546742/

And “LGBT Youth” still in development...
Research Question (conversion therapy)

What does research say about conversion therapy?
Research Question (conversion therapy)

Presented findings on UNM Health Sciences Campus

Created an official statement for The Network speaking out about the harms of this practice (join other mental health providers)

Worked with New Mexico Occupational Therapy Association who voted to adopt this statement

Active lobbying in NM for legislation that would ban conversion therapy for minors (passed!)

Submitted a proposal to the American Occupational Therapy Association to create a similar statement on the harms of conversion therapy
Additional Research Question
Reflection and Summary

What I learned... Occupational therapy has a significant role in reducing health disparities in LGBT individuals and communities! And there are some ideas for “best practice.”

1) Identifying and countering states of occupational deprivation

For example:

Working with a transgender person who has co-occurring disorders to modify/grade daily tasks so they can continue participating during tough periods
Reflection and Summary

2) Through occupation, protective factors can be nurtured (like self-esteem, feelings of mastery, creative expression, greater autonomy, self-advocacy, etc.) to address psychosocial barriers to participation.

For example:

Supporting LGBT youth experiencing homelessness in a community service project to develop leadership skills.
Reflection and Summary

3) Strategies for empowerment work best when conducted on A) individual level, B) systems level, AND C) societal level (Laugharne, & Priebe, 2006)

For example:
A) Working with an LGBT individual experiencing homelessness to incorporate health-promoting habits into their daily routine
B) Working with a homeless shelter to incorporate accessible social/leisure programming into their daily schedule
C) Lobbying for legislation
Reflection and Summary

What I learned... personal level
◦ General understanding about body of research on LGBT health
◦ Community partnerships are always a good idea, and make you smarter!
◦ Fact sheets are hard to make...
Next Steps

- Resource sheets need further refinement (collaboration)
- Additional resource sheets on OT/ LGBT and... disability, HIV/AIDS (chronic disease management), homelessness, trauma, substance use?
- Article pending in OT Student Pulse (national e-newsletter to students)
- Will write article for OT Practice (national monthly magazine for AOTA members)
- Continue developing The Network to be a central resource for OT practitioners interested in LGBT health
  - Mentorship program
  - Continue virtual meetings
  - Start virtual lecture series
- Submit a proposal for a talk at WFOT (diversity themed!)
Additional Resources

Safe Zone trainings in ABQ
  ◦ UNM Truman Health Services (free?)
  ◦ Transgender Resource Center of New Mexico
  ◦ UNM LGBTQ Resource Center
  ◦ SAGE Albuquerque (seniors)

Online resources:
  ◦ Fenway Health
  ◦ SAMHSA
  ◦ SAGE
  ◦ Center of Excellence for Transgender Health
  ◦ Williams Institute
  ◦ Bisexual Resource Center
  ◦ Lambda Legal
  ◦ National Center for Lesbian Rights
  ◦ GLSEN
References


References (cont.)


