AWARENESS OF CONFLICT BETWEEN NURSES AND THERAPISTS AND PREFERRED CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES
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ABSTRACT
Conflict is inevitable in healthcare organizations and can arise in many different ways. One of the main ways conflict manifests in healthcare settings is between therapy and nursing. Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann developed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and utilized survey design methodology, specifically the TKI. This study brought awareness of conflict between the therapy and nursing groups and utilized conflict management styles utilized by the groups, as measured by the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument as well as focus groups. This study was completed in two phases: Phase I- Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and Phase II- focus groups. The sample size for Phase I was 13 therapists and 4 nurses and the sample size for Phase II- therapy focus group was 8 participants and the sample size for the nursing focus group was 4 participants. There was no statistically significant difference between the conflict management styles utilized by the groups, as the overwhelming majority of both groups preferred the avoiding and accommodating styles. A total of seven themes were developed in this study, 3 during the therapy focus group and 3 during the nursing focus group. All of the themes supported the core theme of providing quality patient care.

OBJECTIVES
• Purpose: To identify the awareness of conflict between therapy and nursing personnel in a local inpatient rehabilitation hospital and determine the most preferred and least preferred conflict management styles of the therapists and nurses in this facility.
• Primary research question: What is the awareness of conflict between nurses and therapists at a local inpatient rehabilitation hospital?
• Secondary research question: What are the most preferred and least preferred conflict management styles of the therapists and nurses at this facility?
• Hypothesis: Differences in conflict management styles between therapists and nurses might be a contributing factor to existing conflict between the two groups.

INSTRUMENT
In 1974 Kenneth W. Thomas and Ralph H. Kilmann developed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). “The TKI was designed to measure a person’s behavior in conflict situations” (Thomas & Kilmann, n.d.). In any situational conflict a person’s behavior is classified along two dimensions: assertiveness, the extent to which an individual endorses his or her own goals and cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual tries to satisfy another person’s concerns (Thomas & Kilmann, n.d.). The TKI classifies five conflict management modes that an individual may use in any given situation dealing with conflict along these two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. The five modes are as follows: competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and compromising. The following studies utilized the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument to assess conflict management styles within a singular realm of healthcare (Iglesias & Vallejo, 2012; Landa-Gonzalez, 2008; Sportsman & Hamilton, 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW
Conflict is a term that is evident within daily human interaction, especially in the work environment, conflict can be generally described as an interactive process manifested as incompatibility, disagreements, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e., individuals, groups, and organizations)” (as cited in Rahim, 2001). Thus, conflict may occur at a personal, team, or organizational level. Studies have addressed aspects of conflict and the management of conflict within the healthcare realm while indicating that negative effects associated with conflict have an overwhelming potential to decrease when attention and training in conflict management are implemented. The positive outcomes that can result from conflict management are realized by both parties involved and set the stage for a better understanding of conflict and the development of strategies to reduce it (Hall, p. 194).

After two 3-hour sessions designed to teach practical conflict management strategies applicable to workplace duties and responsibilities positive improvement was noted in four areas: role overload, role boundaries, psychological strain, and interpersonal strain as a result of these training sessions (Haraway & Haraway, 2005). Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). “The TKI was designed to measure a person’s behavior in conflict situations” (Thomas & Kilmann, n.d.). In any situational conflict a person’s behavior is classified along two dimensions: assertiveness, the extent to which an individual endorses his or her own goals and cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual tries to satisfy another person’s concerns (Thomas & Kilmann, n.d.). This study brought awareness of conflict between the therapy and nursing groups and utilized conflict management styles utilized by the groups, as measured by the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument as well as focus groups. This study was completed in two phases: Phase I- Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI) and Phase II- focus groups. The sample size for Phase I was 13 therapists and 4 nurses and the sample size for Phase II- therapy focus group was 8 participants and the sample size for the nursing focus group was 4 participants. There was no statistically significant difference between the conflict management styles utilized by the groups, as the overwhelming majority of both groups preferred the avoiding and accommodating styles. A total of seven themes were developed in this study, 3 during the therapy focus group and 3 during the nursing focus group. All of the themes supported the core theme of providing quality patient care.

RESULTS
Phase I- Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline Group</th>
<th>Avoiding Mode (%)</th>
<th>Accommodating Mode (%)</th>
<th>Compromising Mode (%)</th>
<th>Competing Mode (%)</th>
<th>Collaborating Mode (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NURSING</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median</td>
<td>76.50</td>
<td>92.50</td>
<td>17.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase II- Focus Groups
Therapy Themes
- misperceptions of what each group does

Nursing Themes
- lack of communication
- lack of communication

CORE THEME: providing quality patient care

DISCUSSION
Conflict is inevitable in healthcare organizations and can arise in many different ways. One of the main ways conflict manifests in healthcare settings is between therapy and nursing. According to Landa-Gonzalez (2008), “Working in a challenging and dynamic healthcare environment makes occupational therapists vulnerable to increased interpersonal conflicts” (p. 56).

IMPLICATIONS FOR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
Enforce communication and social skills
- Priest et al. (2000) state, “effective communication is central to all therapeutic interaction and is increasingly identified in standards of health and social care” (p. 238).
- Communication and interpersonal skills are cited in several articles as key characteristics for conflict management in the workplace (Dorre et al., 2008; Brown et al., 2012; Gardner, 2005; Hall, 2005).

Why do OT’s need to practice conflict management?

REFERENCES
Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (TKI). “The TKI was designed to measure a person’s behavior in conflict situations” (Thomas & Kilmann, n.d.). In any situational conflict a person’s behavior is classified along two dimensions: assertiveness, the extent to which an individual endorses his or her own goals and cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual tries to satisfy another person’s concerns (Thomas & Kilmann, n.d.). The TKI classifies five conflict management modes that an individual may use in any given situation dealing with conflict along these two dimensions: assertiveness and cooperativeness. The five modes are as follows: competing, accommodating, avoiding, collaborating and compromising. The following studies utilized the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument to assess conflict management styles within a singular realm of healthcare (Iglesias & Vallejo, 2012; Landa-Gonzalez, 2008; Sportsman & Hamilton, 2008).