Advocating for Occupational Therapy’s Role in the area of Cancer Related Cognitive Dysfunction at Stefanie Spielman Comprehensive Breast Center

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of this residency was to gain advanced skills in leadership and clinical excellence through advocating for occupational therapy’s role in the area of cancer related cognitive dysfunction (CRCD), aimed at improving the outcomes of clients served at Stefanie Spielman Comprehensive Breast Center (SSCBC).

RESIDENCY SITE

Stefanie Spielman
Comprehensive Breast Center

Outpatient clinical setting offering a variety of services that encompass the full continuum of breast cancer care from screening and diagnosis through treatment and survivorship.

“With each year, each month, and each day, there are new breakthroughs and possibilities in the fight against cancer.”—Stefanie Spielman

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Literature Review
- Surveyed Staff and Cancer Survivors
- Clinic Observations of SSCBC Staff and Patients

ABSTRACT

Occupational therapy is effective in helping cancer survivors manage cancer related cognitive dysfunction (CRCD). However, while occupational therapists are uniquely qualified to provide CRCD services, occupational therapy continues to be underutilized among this population. A residency site needs assessment was conducted which included a written summary of findings informed by staff and patient questionnaire responses, relevant literature, and clinic observations. The results of this needs assessment, paired with a comprehensive annotated bibliography and interviews with oncology cognitive rehabilitation experts, guided efforts to advocate for increased occupational therapy services for individuals with CRCD. In addition to the development of a staff handout and updated patient brochure, formal presentations were provided to SSCBC staff to increase awareness of how occupational therapy can benefit cancer survivors with CRCD with the overall objective to increase referrals to ambulatory oncology occupational therapy services. In preparation for increased referrals, CRCD programming for provision of occupational therapy services was enhanced through the development of a clinic kit including appropriate evaluation/outcome measures and intervention tools.

CANCER RELATED COGNITIVE DYSFUNCTION DEFINITION

- Impairment in one or more cognitive domains as a result of a cancer diagnosis and subsequent cancer treatment
  - verbal and visual memory
  - attention/focus
  - processing speed

BACKGROUND

OT’s Role in Oncology Rehabilitation
- Occupational therapy services have the potential to benefit adults with cancer and reduce the risk of cancer-related disability and improve overall quality of life.7
- Unfortunately, occupational therapy is underutilized among this population because of lack of awareness about OT, lack of knowledge regarding whom OT would benefit, and accessibility to OT services.7

Cancer Related Cognitive Dysfunction
- “Up to 83% of breast cancer survivors who have received chemotherapy report some degree of cognitive dysfunction.”5
- In terms of psychosocial influence, women reported cognitive changes as “frightening,” “frustrating,” and “upsetting.” With some stating they lost their ability to function independently and felt emotionally drained.1
- CRCD can negatively impact a cancer survivor’s participation in meaningful occupations such as driving, parenting, community activities, managing finances, and more.6

Advocating for OT’s Role in Cancer Related Cognitive Dysfunction
- “Advocacy is a client-centred strategy involving a variety of actions taken by the client and therapist … to enact change for the client such that engagement in occupation is enhanced through … improving quality of life.”9
- Communication channels between oncology and rehabilitation departments are necessary and must be opened to ensure patients are receiving the care they need.8

OUTCOMES

- Learning Goal #1: Research
  - comprehensive annotated bibliography
  - written summary of findings from interviews with oncology cognitive rehabilitation experts

- Learning Goal #2: Evaluate Need
  - develop questionnaires for SSCBC oncology rehab staff and SSCBC cancer survivors to assess need for OT services in the area of CRCD
  - written summary of findings from needs assessment informed by questionnaire responses, relevant literature, and clinic observations

- Learning Goal #3: Advocate for OT
  - development of staff handout to increase awareness of OT’s role in CRCD
  - formal presentations to SSCBC staff/administration which will reflect the findings of my needs assessment and literature search

- Learning Goal #4: Enhance OT Programming
  - written summary of findings from interviews with oncology cognitive rehabilitation experts
  - develop clinic kit with relevant literature and list of potential cognitive evaluation/outcome measures and intervention tools

- amend current patient brochure for occupational therapy department to include CRCD services

References available upon request