



The Challenges Involved in Conducting a Research Project in a Medium Secure Environment – A Reflection

By Kate Huntington & Louisa Littler
10th December 2009

Aims of the Presentation:

- To briefly explain our research project
- To reflect on the challenges and opportunities we experienced
- To suggest some considerations to practitioners who are planning research

Our Project

- “ A Study to Determine which Relaxation Methods of Stress and Anxiety Management are Most Effective, and Most Readily Generalised for Patients with a Diagnosis of Schizophrenia”.



Rationale:

'OT within the forensic setting, heralds both opportunities and challenges for research and development... One of the most challenging aspects is the development of a research base specifically within this client population'.

Duncan et al (2003, p55)

- Recent research is limited
- Use of outcome measures
- Area of professional development and interest

Occupational Risk Factors:

- The secure environment can be a stressful experience, which has the potential to cause and maintain...
- Occupational Deprivation
- Occupational Alienation
- Occupational Disruption

(Wilcock, 1998; Townsend and Wilcock, 2004; Whiteford 2004)

Relaxation as an Occupational Activity

- Anxiety/stress may have a significant impact on engagement in occupation so...
- ...finding ways to cope with stress can have a positive effect on an individual's life and can influence occupational engagement
- Enjoyable
- Physical Health Benefits
- May replace maladaptive coping strategies



Research Process:

- Trawl of literature conducted
- Proposal submitted to Ethics Committee
- Patient interest explored – letters sent
- Liaison with clinical teams
- Consent from patients formally obtained
- Ongoing treatment offered
- Plan – to offer four patients with Schizophrenia two methods of relaxation – six sessions of each.
- GSR Monitor Data collected
- Rigorous format



Challenges Encountered:

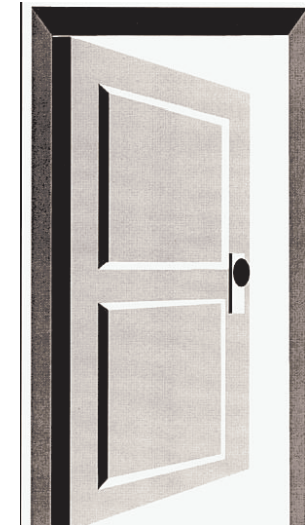
Stress Reduction Kit

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- Patient Sample
- Logistical considerations
- Data collection
- Caseload

Opportunities Encountered:

- Experienced process of research first hand
- Demonstrated to other MDT members that OT's do research
- Ability to increase knowledge about research area
- Develop skills in offering relaxation
- Increased value of evidence based practice
- Confidence
- Appreciate patient experience
- Recognition / valuing outcome measures
- Developing a culture of research within the company



If Research is going to work, address the following:

- Dedicated ring fenced time for research
- Research Post / sabbatical opportunities
- Who is study going to be of value to?
- Researchers have ownership
- Research into researching
- Familiarise yourself well with any equipment
- Adapt study to address issues related to the environment
- Consider criteria carefully
- Have your team behind you
- Seek financial support (if necessary)
- Be patient!





Conclusion:

- Need for evidence based practice is understood
- Providing practice based evidence is difficult to achieve for clinicians with a full caseload
- It is challenging to conduct research in a workplace with a newly emerging research culture
- It is necessary to have a dedicated post / sabbatical
- Don't get too stressed (ironic in our case!)

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