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**Factors and Demographics Regarding Work-Related
Pain and Injuries in Manual Therapists In the Outpatient
Setting**

**Western New England University
Doctor of Occupational Therapy**

**Doctoral Experiential Final Report
July 2021**

Carol D. Tinio, OTD



**Factors and Demographics Regarding Work-Related Pain and Injuries of Manual
Therapists in the Outpatient Setting**

Doctoral Experiential Capstone Project

Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program | Western New England University

By

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July 2021

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Date

Doctoral Experiential Project Final Report

Abstract

The Doctoral Experiential (DEx) consisted of a 14-week community experiential and a scholarly component, which aimed to address the problem of work-related pain and injury within the manual therapy population. Items developed throughout the project include educational materials, including a journal article submitted through the Journal of Occupational Therapy Education (JOTE) and a continuing education course titled “Techniques, Tools and Ergonomic Interventions to Minimize Work-Related Pain in Manual Therapists”. The consulting site, ATI, worked with the group including being the subject of the needs assessment for our project. The researcher’s scholarly components are factors and demographics within the manual therapy population, where the aim was to examine different contributing factors to therapists’ pain, including age, workload, and years of experience. The researcher analyzed and compiled a list of factors, demographics, and statistics that contributed to the manual therapy literature to decrease risk of pain and injury in therapists. The group has successfully implemented a CEU course and journal article which has contributed to the literature available regarding the scholarly topic.

Introduction

The prevalence of pain and injury in manual therapists is heavily supported by evidence-based literature concerning manual therapists in different therapy fields. According to Campo, Sueki, Hyland, Pappas (2019), manual therapists are at risk to experience pain in the hand and thumb regions. Furthermore, Albert, Currie-Jackson, and Duncan (2008) observed a high rate of musculoskeletal pain and injury within massage therapists. Within physical therapists in one study, there is also a 65% prevalence of thumb pain as a result of their job, according to McMahon, Stiller, and Trott (2006). The target population is the manual therapy

population, which includes occupational therapists, physical therapists, massage therapists and certified hand therapists, face an increase of pain and injury due to treatments provided at work. Being in pain affects their ability to provide high quality treatments, limits their occupations, and impacts the many therapists in the profession. Factors that affect this outcome in manual therapists include individual factors, environmental factors, emotional factors, physical factors, the use of tools, body mechanics and ergonomics, and work-related factors. The Doctoral Experiential aimed to directly address this problem within the population primarily through educational efforts.

Doctoral Experiential Project Overview

The Doctoral Experiential is a 14-week community experiential that focuses on providing an intervention for manual therapists to address pain and injury due to their profession. The group aimed to address the prevalence of pain and injury while each member focused on their own scholarly topic. The scholarly topics include demographics and background factors affecting therapists, ergonomics and positioning, as well as tools. The community experiential included submitting a scholarly article regarding our topic through Journal of Occupational Therapy Education (JOTE), creating a CEU course with Home CEU and presenting a poster regarding our topic and findings. For the scholarly article submitted through JOTE, the group distributed a survey through Google Forms that aimed to study the manual therapy population. There were 41 responses to the survey, which asked therapists about the prevalence of their pain, years of experience, number of patients, and self-treatments for pain. The types of therapists included in the survey population include occupational therapists, physical therapists, and certified hand therapists. The CEU course submitted through Home CEU aimed to educate therapists and students about the prevalence of pain within the manual therapist community, common injuries,

proper ergonomics and positioning, and the use of tools. The CEU course includes an assessment to determine if one has successfully passed the course. The factors were analyzed and compiled through both the needs assessment and the survey results. The researcher was able to further discuss and develop documents in order to expand the list of possible factors that manual therapists have with regard to pain and injury.

Discussion and Recommendation

The Doctoral Experiential includes the successful completion of a 14-week community experiential and included the creation of a CEU course and journal article for the intended target population. With regard to the survey, the group aimed to gain more respondents to build the population, however found that the population was representative of the manual therapy community characteristics and demographics. Furthermore, comparing the results of the survey results from the previous year to this year, there was a greater variety of responses to the questions compared to the previous year, including the prevalence of pain, years of experience, and self treatments. The Doctoral Experiential ultimately aimed to educate and increase awareness of the problem in order for therapists to have the knowledge to protect themselves from pain and injury. Recommendations for future research within this topic include increasing population size for survey, working with a larger scale of clinics, and conducting additional research with other aspects of the topic that has not been covered within this project.

Learning Outcomes

1. Determination of the scale of the problem within manual therapists that are currently practicing and providing manual treatments.

2. Creation and implementation of a continuing education course through an accredited continuing education units provider.
3. Development of a scholarly article regarding the DEx topic through a peer-reviewed occupational therapy journal.
4. Community intervention planning for the manual therapy community including implementation of a needs assessment for the target population.
5. Competency of use of technology through providing intervention and educational materials through virtual methods.

References

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Appendices

Appendix A: [Survey](#)

Appendix B: Continuing Education Course: “Techniques, Tools, and Ergonomic Interventions to Minimize Work-Related Pain in Manual Therapists”

Course Submission Pending: Home CEU website (Home CEU, 2021)

Appendix C: Journal Article “The Effect of Work-Related Pain in Therapists Utilizing Manual Techniques in an Outpatient Rehab Setting”

Manuscript Submission Pending: Journal of Occupational Therapy Education (JOTE, 2021).