SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY AND OCCUPATIONAL TREATMENT: THE BENEFITS OF INTERPROFESSIONAL COLLABORATION IN TREATING PEOPLE WITH AUTISM

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Abstract
Autism Spectrum Disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder that causes deficits in various aspects of daily living. People with autism (PWA) often benefit from various forms of therapy to augment independent and functional daily living tasks as well as communication skills. Speech-Language Pathologists (SLP) and Occupational Therapists (OT) play a vital role in providing intervention to people with autism in order to promote independence. Although each profession encompasses a diverse realm of knowledge, there are several areas in which Speech Language Pathologists and Occupational Therapists can utilize interprofessional collaboration while providing intervention to an individual with autism. Various interprofessional collaboration can be used to benefit the individual are described and discussed.

Key Words
Autism, speech-language pathology, occupational therapy, interprofessional, social communication, sensory

Speech-Language Pathology
Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) are licensed professionals in speech, language and communication. They are experts in several types of communication and swallowing and are equipped to work with people with speech sound disorders, language, literacy, social communication, voice, fluency, cognition and feeding (ASHA, 2019).

Communication and Social Interventions

Articulation
Articulation is the sequence and control of sounds in speech. Developing motor sequences to produce sound and enhance body language with ASD lead and develop some of these behaviors, communication skills, and social skills. The SLP can hold group sessions and individualized programs to improve the child’s articulation.

Phonological Interventions
Phonological interventions focus on the structure of speech sounds. Many have been used to improve the structure of speech and improve social skills. Interventions can be used with individuals who are at-risk for dysfluency or have dysfluency.

Social Narratives
Social narratives are sentences or stories that explain or describe a particular social situation. They can be used to help individuals with autism understand and participate in social situations.

Functional Communication Interventions
PCRs are interventions used for children to enable school age students with ASD to increase social communication skills (Cash, 2001). The SLP may be the process involved in providing case and functional communication skills.

Behavior and Sensory Interventions

Value Modeling
Value modeling involves teaching new behaviors through modeling and demonstrating how to perform those behaviors. Children learn by watching others and imitating their behaviors. The SLP can model the desired behavior and then provide feedback on how to perform the behavior correctly.

Functional Communication Interventions
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Parent Training
Parent training is a type of behavior therapy that focuses on teaching parents how to interact with their children in a positive manner. Parents are trained to use positive reinforcement and behavior modification techniques to encourage desired behaviors and decrease problem behaviors.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Occupational therapy (OT) is a specialized profession that aims to support an individual’s health and participation in life by engaging in various occupations and daily routines (Tomehook, LaViolette & Wallace, 2010). OTs define “occupations” as activities that are meaningful and support the health, well-being, and development of an individual.

Communication and Social Interventions

Sensory Integration Therapy
Sensory integration therapy is based on the idea that human beings process sensory information through interaction with the environment. The therapist uses a variety of techniques to help the child integrate sensory information in a meaningful way.

Attention-Mediated Interventions
Attention-mediated interventions are used to increase a child’s attention to the therapist. The therapist will use visual or auditory cues to gain the child’s attention before providing the instruction.

Behavior and Sensory Interventions

Sensory Integration Therapy
Sensory integration therapy is a method of treatment that uses a series of targeted exercises to help individuals understand and adapt to their environment. The therapist uses various techniques to help individuals learn to interpret sensory information in a functional way.

Sensory Motor Education
Sensory motor education is an intervention designed to improve the child’s ability to move and interact with their environment. It involves activities that help the child develop their motor skills.

Sensory-based interventions are crucial in improving the child’s ability to adapt to their environment. These interventions can involve activities that help the child develop motor skills or improve their sensory integrative abilities.

References


Benefits of Collaboration
In PWA, there are several factors that contribute to one’s inability to independently function in daily life. The manner in which PWA socially interact, functionally communicate and independently process sensory information all impact their daily functioning. By utilizing the practice of occupational therapy and speech therapy, PWA may greatly benefit. The OT can implement sensory based interventions to help regulate the sensory system, so the SLP can then teach effective communication and social interventions. As the PWA learns to rehearse their sensory system as well as how to communicate, they begin to increase independence in daily functioning skills.

Conclusions
Based on the current understanding of autism and the wide range of functional abilities that PWA have, it is clear that a variety of interventions may be utilized to meet the needs of each individual. There is also a deeper understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SLP and OT in the intervention process and how important each profession is in addressing an individual’s specific needs. Although each professional has its respective goals, the holistic goal is to increase the independent functioning of the PWA. In order for an individual to make maximal gains provided he or she is at the current level of functioning, the SLPs and OTs may require one another’s assistance in order to obtain the greatest gains. Each individual with autism is unique and special in his or her own way. By OTs and SLPs providing more interprofessional interventions, the individual has the opportunity to maximize their gains in order to reach his or her full potential.