Parents' Goals: An Analysis of Therapist Reasoning

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Parents’ Goals: An Analysis of Therapist Reasoning
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Background
- Difficulty processing and integrating sensation is highly prevalent in children with ASD and has been shown to impact participation (Ben Sasson, et al, 2008).
- Parents’ goals for their child with ASD often focus on independence in ADLs (Schaaf et al, 2014) and social participation (Cohn, Kramer, Schub, & May-Benson, 2014).
- Occupational therapists have a unique skill set to address these goals and, when appropriate, may use a sensory integrative (OT/SI) approach.
- There is a paucity in the literature describing how OT/SI therapists use assessment data to link SI factors to participation challenges.
- Data Driven Decision Making (DDDM) provides structure to guide therapist’s clinical reasoning in interpreting assessment data, developing goals and planning interventions (Schaaf, 2015).
- Use of the systematic DDDM process addresses the AOTA Centennial Vision of science-driven and evidence-based practice (AOTA, 2007).

Purpose
Illustrate the use of DDDM to develop parent-identified goals for occupational therapy and to identify underlying sensory integration factors hypothesized to be impacting participation.

Participants
Children ages 4-8 years with ASD (n=32) from a RCT evaluating outcome of occupational therapy using sensory integration (Schaaf et al., 2014).
ASD diagnosis confirmed through ADL-R and ADOS.

Table 1: Participant Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Mean ± SD/Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Mean age in months (SD ± range)</td>
<td>71.8 (SD = 12.8; range = 4.0 - 71.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (M/F)</td>
<td>Gender (% male)</td>
<td>81.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Ethnicity (% Caucasian, Asian, and not reported)</td>
<td>90.65 Caucasian, 6.25% Asian, 3.1% not reported</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Percent of parents with education at 4 year degree or higher</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Verbal IQ</td>
<td>Non-Verbal IQ (range)</td>
<td>93.4 (55-119)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean ADS autism severity score (range)</td>
<td>Mean ADS autism severity score (range)</td>
<td>8.08 (5-10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Methods
1. One hundred and sixty goals were identified and developed in collaboration with parents; they were then confirmed by parents for accuracy and rated by importance and relevance.
2. Using the DDDM process, goals were analyzed to identify underlying SI factors (sensory reactivity, sensory perception, vestibular-bilateral integration, and somatopraxis).
3. Goals were organized in categories according to OTPF 3 (AOTA, 2014) area of occupation (e.g. ADLs, Rest and Sleep, Education, Play, or Social Participation).
4. ICF category (body structure-function, activity, participation) also identified.
5. Frequency counts of each area of occupation, SI factors, and ICF category.
6. Goals were organized into pictorial representations to identify the SI factors impacting each goal area.

Findings
Figure 1: Pictorial representation of patterns of variation in SI factors impacting OTPF area of occupation.

Findings
- Parent-identified goals for OT/SI most frequently focused on areas related to ADLs, play, and social participation.
- Forty-seven percent of the goals were classified at the participation level of the ICF framework, 50% at activity level, and 3% at the body structure-function level.
- Sensory reactivity (over- or under-reactivity) was the most frequently hypothesized SI factor followed by somatopraxis and sensory perception contributing to goals.
- ADLs were most frequently impacted by sensory reactivity and somatopraxis.
- Social participation was most frequently impacted by sensory reactivity, perception, and somatopraxis.

Interpretation and Implications
- A comprehensive assessment of sensory integration is an important component of the occupational therapy process for children with ASD when parent-identified goals relate to ADLs, play, or social participation.
- Sensory reactivity is found to be an impactful SI factor, which is congruent with parents’ identification of poor self-regulation of behavior as an explanation for seeking OT/SI intervention (Cohn et al., 2014).
- The use of DDDM provides a roadmap for occupational therapists to explicitly use assessment data to link parent-identified goals to hypothesized SI factors impacting occupational performance.
- Use of data to customize interventions to address and measure outcomes at the SI factor level (proximal outcome) and the participation level (distal outcome).

Conclusions
Findings emphasize the value of addressing parents’ goals and the need to identify the factors that may be impacting these goals. DDDM can be used to guide an occupational therapist's reasoning when identifying and analyzing goals.

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References


