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Research Question

What is the validity and reliability of occupational therapy (OT) assessment tools when delivered via telehealth or remote technologies?

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the value of telehealth as a delivery model for occupational therapy. Evaluations and interventions should be reliable and valid when provided through telehealth (Yang, et al., 2023). This systematic review explored OT assessments that have been validated for telehealth administration, including synchronously and asynchronously (i.e., completed by the client without a therapist present).

Method

- **Review Process:** Adhered to the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) Guidelines.
- **Databases:** CINAHL, PubMed, and ScienceDirect through Hawai'i Pacific University's online library database.
- **Search terms:** "Occupational therapy OR occupational therapist OR OT" AND "telehealth OR telemedicine" AND "assessment OR assessment tool OR assessment tools OR assessing OR assessment methods" AND "psychometrics OR validity OR validation OR reliability"
- **Inclusion criteria:**
 - Occupational therapy assessment
 - Peer-reviewed
 - Published in English
 - Dated between 2019-2025
- **Exclusion criteria:**
 - Studies that did not meet inclusion criteria
 - Articles that were systematic reviews, scoping reviews, dissertations, presentations, and home assessments not related to telehealth



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Results

This systematic review included five studies. Two themes emerged from the studies related to the validity and reliability of OT assessments that can be administered through telehealth and assessments using ambient and wearable sensor technologies.

Discussion

The results of this systematic review suggest that assessments can be developed or modified to provide valid assessment data for clients evaluated by occupational therapy within a telehealth service delivery model. Due to the breadth of occupational therapy practice, occupational therapy evaluations can use a widely varied set of assessments depending on the diagnosis of the client. Many clients live in rural areas or have conditions that prevent them from attending visits in person. By conducting studies to show that the assessment tools are valid and reliable, these studies increase confidence in using specific assessments within a telehealth service delivery model.

Conclusion

Studies included within this systematic review provide evidence on the validity and reliability of specific OT assessments administered using a telehealth service delivery model. More research is necessary to explore psychometrics of various OT assessments when administered through telehealth. As newer technologies emerge, including wearable sensors and ambient environments, research should evaluate their efficacy within OT evaluations..

References

