Rehabilitation Sciences PhD
Alumni Highlight

Alumnus: Camille Skubi-Peplaski, Ph.D., OTR/L, BCP, FAOTA

Graduation Year: December 2012

Current Position: Associate Professor, Eastern Kentucky University Occupational Therapy Department

Dissertation Title: Environmental Influences on Occupational Therapy Practice

Background: Rehabilitation hospitals serve to foster a client’s independence in preparation to return home after an injury or insult. Having space in rehabilitation environments that are home-like and supportive for each client can facilitate participation in occupation and assist in learning and practicing the skills needed to transition home. Yet, occupational therapists typically provide interventions to clients in therapy gyms with exercise and impairment based equipment. Currently the stroke population is changing to being younger with a desire to return home to live. Identifying the optimal rehabilitation environment is imperative to guide occupational therapy practice and improve outcomes.

Purpose: There appears to be a mismatch between the environments that are available in rehabilitation and the interventions used to help clients learn to care for themselves. The focus of this dissertation study was to investigate how the therapy environment influenced the interventions that the occupational therapists chose to support the health and well-being of individuals admitted to an inpatient rehabilitation program following a stroke.
**Key Findings & Clinical Implications:**

Occupational therapy practice for inpatient stroke programs can be improved if therapists are aware of the influence of the environment on interventions. Therapists identified that the optimal rehabilitative environment is home-like so they can offer occupation-based interventions and provide interventions if the gym inhibits this practice. Therapists think they should be providing occupation-based interventions, yet they often resort to the habit of relying on preparatory methods in the gym. Both the therapist and client benefitted from a rehabilitation environment that provided a variety of choices, including home-like environments that are convenient and with equipment that is positioned and set up to “see it, use it”. Supportive environments enhance the use of all components of clinical reasoning, which facilitates client-centered care and evidence based practice. The environment should serve to support the therapist to create a partnership and successful interventions for the client to recover from a stroke.

**Big Picture:**

The environment influenced occupational therapy interventions and it is recommended that the occupational therapist match the client’s goals to the ideal environment for optimal intervention.

Overall, a therapist should strive to be: an occupational expert, to provide treatment that combines preparatory methods, activities and occupation-based interventions and finds supportive environments to maximize occupational performance.

**Dissertation Related Publications:**


What Happened Next? Since graduating I accepted a position at Eastern Kentucky University in the Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy Department. I also had the opportunity to continue to work with Dr. Lumy Sawaki investigating the effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions. In 2013, Melba Custer and I received a small grant from EKU University funds which allowed us to conduct a 16 person study comparing occupation-based and modified constraint-induced interventions. Each participant received pre and post testing, including Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, and then was randomized into an intervention group receiving 8 intervention sessions. Currently, we completed interventions with the last participant in June 2015. We have presented this study at several conferences and tied for Best Poster at UK’s PMR Research Day in 2014 & 2015. We will be publishing the results in the near future.