

Examining the OT Perception of Efficacy in Telehealth During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Lori E. Breeden, EdD, OTR, Brynn Shallenberger, Lauren Gandhi, Samantha Rich, Alexandria Dattilo, Karlie Hamilton, Kirstin Krause, Eric Meyers

University of Indianapolis, Indianapolis, Indiana, United States

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Primary Author and Speaker: Lori E. Breeden, loribreednot@gmail.com

During the COVID-19 pandemic, telehealth was used to gain access to health care services (Rortvedt & Jacobs, 2019). As telehealth continues to be used it is important to understand how to best implement quality sessions (Breeden et al., 2022). This qualitative study examined OTs' perceptions of telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aimed to identify practitioner needs related to the development of telehealth skills and to make recommendations about the direction of continuing education for telehealth. A phenomenological approach was used (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Participants included OT practitioners who used telehealth in practice. Snowball sampling was used to recruit participants. The qualitative study used semi-structured interviews, recorded on Zoom. Data included interview transcription and was analyzed using selective and detailed reading approaches. Field notes, member checking, and reflexivity journals provided trustworthiness (Krefting, 1991). Thematic analysis of the transcription resulted in assigned categories and codes, which were more frequently a focus of discussion during interviews. Data analysis revealed the preparation of the client, the caregiver, and the social environment allowed therapists to provide more satisfying services. Additionally, the effectiveness of the session was influenced by caregiver involvement and preparedness. Logistically, the increased preparation time for sessions took away from their time treating patients, decreasing productivity. Participants' experiences revealed four themes: preparation for practice, caregiver involvement, therapist productivity, and employer logistics. The information revealed through this study impacts OT practitioners as they should understand how service delivery will change with telehealth. Understanding ways to modify OT practice could make telehealth an effective tool instead of a frustrating alternative to in person delivery.

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