

Uncovering Pediatricians' Knowledge of OT: Bridging the Gap Between Pediatric Primary Care & Early Intervention

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PURPOSE: Early developmental screenings are essential for identification of developmental delays in pediatric primary care (PC) but are not always administered consistently or when appropriate. The purpose of this study was to identify pediatricians' knowledge of occupational therapy (OT), analyze OT's role in PC services, and investigate opportunities for OT services to bridge the gap between pediatric PC and early intervention (EI) within New York state. DESIGN and

METHODS: This quantitative study involved the dissemination of an anonymous online survey to pediatricians via social media platforms. A total of 24 responses were gathered and analyzed using descriptive statistics using Qualtrics.

RESULTS: 14.3% of surveyed pediatricians are not administering screenings at the appropriate visits and consequently are not referring patients to EI promptly and when appropriate; 85.7% of surveyed pediatricians are aware of OT, but 33.3% are not aware of OT's role in the treatment of developmental delays; 75% of surveyed pediatricians who referred to EI saw improvement in developmental areas; 25% of surveyed pediatricians who did not refer to EI but would have referred them if difficulties were reported; One-quarter of surveyed pediatricians who did not refer a child to EI but should have referred them reported that sometimes, a child may seem to be developing appropriately initially, but years later there may be more apparent delays.

CONCLUSION: Ultimately, once the scope of practice of OT is widely recognized and understood, occupational therapists can collaborate with pediatricians to address the overall developmental progress of the pediatric population.

IMPACT STATEMENT: The limited knowledge pediatricians exhibit continues. This tells us that we need to collaborate and network with pediatricians so that we can meet the needs of those very young and vulnerable clients and their families. Our voices need to be speaking to be heard and acknowledged by pediatricians.

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