

OT Practitioners' Role in Addressing Screen Time in Pediatric Settings

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PURPOSE: Available research regarding the effects of screen time (ST) on development demonstrate positive and negative impacts on areas such as sensory processing skills, motor skills, psychosocial and emotional functioning, and sleep. There is a paucity of research examining the role of occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) within increased ST exposures. The purpose was to examine OTPs' role in addressing and utilizing ST within pediatric settings. Research questions included: How, if at all, do OTPs perceive their role and overall scope of practice regarding ST? How, if at all, is ST addressed in pediatric settings by OTPs? What, if any, are the perceived benefits/limitations for use of ST within intervention?

DESIGN: A qualitative participatory action research (PAR) design was used. Participants were sampled using convenience and snowball methods. Inclusionary criteria consisted of individuals who were currently practicing OTPs, currently working in pediatric practice, willing to participate in a 3-step process. The primary recruitment method consisted of convenience sampling from a variety of sources.

METHOD: Data sources comprised focus groups with experiential learning, and follow-up written prompts. Thematic analysis was conducted through axial coding to identify qualitative themes.

RESULTS: Findings consisted of five themes which included: positive uses of ST, negative impacts of ST, impact of practice area, OTP's role in ST, and perceived barriers to addressing ST in practice.

CONCLUSION: Findings demonstrate the wide-ranging impacts ST has on children's development, along with how OTPs are qualified to address ST within their scope of practice. Study findings can help OTPs better understand their role in addressing ST behaviors and utilizing screens as an intervention approach. Thus, this allows clients and families to receive the most comprehensive and effective care possible, through ensuring all factors influencing childhood occupations are addressed.

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