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Health is in your Hand

Webinar on Occupational Therapy for Children with Disabilities



Prajaahita foundation conducts various webinars under the supervision of experts for the healthcare awareness of the people with disabilities. "Saukhyam" is a project for health and wellbeing of persons with disabilities and our effort is to dispense healthcare facilities for them on an individual as well as institutional level.

It is a challenge for the children with disabilities to go out and attend therapy sessions during this pandemic situation. Mrs Arsha Arjun, a Pediatric Occupational Therapist, has explained the methods and techniques to the parents with which they can assist their ward by themselves at home.

Presenter : Mrs Arsha Arjun

Topic: Pediatric Occupational Therapy

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Rehabilitation Medicine is a special branch of medical science which helps to raise the quality of living of persons with physical and developmental skills, cognitive skills, behavioral skills, emotional skills, social skills and communicative skills by helping them to achieve independence in their daily activities. Rehabilitation is a team work that means the patient is being taken collective care from the professionals of the respective fields. The team consists of Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, Psychologist, Counsellor, Social Worker and Rehabilitation Nurse.

Occupational Therapist takes the major role in designing the individual care for the patient. S/he mainly facilitates the functional activities. There are 4 areas in Occupational Therapy.

- Ortho
- Neuro
- Mental Disorder
- Pediatric

There are different branches under Pediatric Department. Those are related to the disabilities with bones, neurological system, genetic disorders etc. Occupational therapists help to bring the people, who suffer from disabilities with the above mentioned areas, back to their normal self.

In Pediatric Occupational therapy, Ortho department concentrates on the growth and development of bones and strengthening of muscles in children. Neuro Department examines cases like the spinal cord injuries occurred to children who fall down from the cradle or cases like poor brain development. This also includes developmental disabilities, hereditary problems and some genetic situations.

General activities performed in the Pediatric Occupational Therapy.

Disorders found in the recent times are; Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Autism, Behavioral Disorders and Intellectual Disabilities. An Occupational Therapist can facilitate a major role in this field. Occupational Therapy serves their share in bringing these children (fully or partially) back to their own living system with the help of

Play Therapy, Sensory Integration, Recreational Activities or Behavioral Therapy.

Children with autism show signs of it from a very early stage of their growth but they fail to get diagnosed sometimes. It is possible to identify from their behavioral patterns whether they are autistic or not, and can provide the required therapy, if the parents can observe and identify the children from their early stages of growth. The role of occupational therapy is very effective to autistic children. Sensory processing issues highly affect Autistic Children.

Tactile defensiveness is a situation in which an individual is highly sensitive to light contact. Theoretically, irregular neural signals are sent to the cortex of the brain when the tactile system is immature and functions poorly, which may interfere with other brain processes. A dysfunctional tactile system may lead to a misconception of touch and/or pain (hyper- or hypo-sensitive) and it may lead to self-imposed isolation, general irritability, distraction, and hyperactivity.

The vestibular system refers to structures within the inner ear that detect movement and changes in the position of the head. Dysfunction can manifest itself in two different ways. Some kids may be hypersensitive to vestibular

stimulation and have fear to perform ordinary activities of movement (e.g.: swings, slides, ramps and inclines). They may also have difficulty learning to ascend or descend stairs and hills. They may be anxious to walk or crawl on uneven or unstable ground. As a consequence, in a vacuum, they seem afraid. The proprioceptive system refers to muscle, joint and tendon components that provide a subconscious knowledge of the location of the body to an individual. The body positions, locations and reflex systems of a person changes automatically according to various circumstances when proprioception works effectively. Any imbalance in this system cause issues with body balancing:- such as difficulty standing on one foot or repeated falls while walking or sitting, uncoordinated motion- like being unable to walk in a straight line, etc.

Another disorder which requires occupational therapy is Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. Most of the children of this time are hyper active. The reason for this issue can be the surroundings where the child lives in. Occupational Therapy helps the children- who are hyper active for most of their time or who are unable to perform their daily chores due to the disorder- to reach back to their normal self by providing adequate therapy sessions.

Occupational Therapy also helps children with Down Syndrome as well. Intellectual stimulation, i.e., the ability to think, identify things, the practice to boost the memory power etc. are the therapies given to them. The activities given to the children are combinations of both mental and physical in nature. Occupational Therapy paves the way for them to pass every stage of their growth without any hurdles.

Occupational Therapy is a boon to students with learning disabilities. Therapies are given according to the diagnosis of disorders. There are practices to improve handwriting and reading. There are situations that occur with learning a specific subject. For example, mathematics is difficult for some students; along with that, they have fear towards that particular subject. The psychologist gives motivation to the child in that situation, after that the occupational therapist helps him to attain the skills using various games and activities, and through sensory stimulation. These are the main areas on which Occupational Therapy functions with its remedial measures.

Mrs. Arsha explained the list of activities which can be performed with the help of objects available at home and shared the answers for the questions raised from audience.

Questions & Answers

Q. I have observed my child seeks for frequent touch or physical proximity. Is it a sensory issue?

Ans. These types of sensory problems are visible depending on various age levels. They might be performing various activities. Pressure compression method, stimulation on the oral areas like cheeks, thumb pressing etc. can be done. Sensory needs fulfil with those actions.
soft toys occupation

Q. My son has developed stronger Olfactory seeking behavior, especially, smell of Vicks Vaporub, Harpic, Tiger Balm and he is frequently producing humming sound.

Ans. Deviate his attention when he does these or allot a special time slot for these activities. Introduce objects with hypotonic smells and desensitizing the affinity towards intense smells can also be done. Brushing and patting softly with fingers will reduce the humming tendency. Try to divert his attention and concentration by producing any higher frequency sounds to gain attention.

Q. What is Hydrotherapy?

Ans. Hydrotherapy is the use of water in the treatment of different conditions, including arthritis and related rheumatic complaints. Hydrotherapy differs from swimming because it involves special exercises that you do in a warm-water pool. This provides High Sensory Feedback, strengthens the muscles, provides unity in functioning and develops relaxation for the mind.