Bringing Sport Psychology into Physiotherapy

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Bringing Sport Psychology into Physiotherapy

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Background

- Gap between knowing and doing evident
- Is a lack of training and education a barrier to sports injury rehabilitation professionals (e.g. physiotherapists) integrating more sport psychology into their work?
- Programme of research to investigate this question

The Study

Purpose:
- To measure the impact of an online sport psychology education module on the sport psychology related attitudes and behaviours of qualified sports physiotherapists in the UK

Previous research:
- Limited previous research directly measuring the impact of a sport psychology education intervention (e.g. Clement & Shannon, 2009; Stiller-Ostrowski et al., 2009)
- The existing research exclusively examines US athletic trainer populations (predominantly student populations)
- These studies typically have relatively short follow-up periods

Key gaps:
- UK professionals
- Those already qualified
- Longitudinal impact
- Distance learning

Method

- 95 physiotherapists working in sport
- Intervention group
  - 23 males & 21 females
  - Mean age = 33.70 years (SD = 8.16)
  - Studied an online module titled ‘Sport psychology for physiotherapists’
  - Module content (as recommended by Heaney et al., 2015):
    - understanding the psychological impact of injury
    - interventions and psychological skills/techniques
    - referral and professional boundaries
- Control group
  - 26 males & 25 females
  - Mean age = 36.11 years (SD = 8.78)
  - Studied an online module titled ‘Strength & conditioning for physiotherapists’
  - Both modules were split into three units requiring approximately 12 hours of study spread over 3 weeks (1 unit per week)

Findings - Attitude

- Hypothesis = There will be a significant difference in physiotherapists’ attitudes towards sport psychology before and after (immediately, three-months and six-months) studying a sport psychology education module
  - Accepted - AAS total scores changed significantly over time for those who studied the sport psychology module
- Hypothesis = There will be a significant difference in attitudes towards sport psychology between the control group and the intervention group
  - Accepted - physiotherapists in the intervention group demonstrated significantly higher attitude towards sport psychology (AAS total) scores than physiotherapists in the control group immediately following the completion of the module
Findings - Attitude

- A 2 x 4 (group x time) ANOVA conducted on the AAIS total score data revealed:
  - No significant interaction between time and group (F(3, 91) = 0.074, p = 0.961, partial η² = 0.008)
  - No significant interaction between group and time on the 'goal-setting' and 'self-talk' subscales, but not on the 'goal-setting' and 'pain tolerance' subscales.
  - Physiotherapists more familiar with motivational strategies such as goal-setting so less room for improvement?

Findings - Behaviour (usage)

- A 2 x 4 (group x time) ANOVA conducted on the PIUS total score data revealed:
  - No significant interaction between time and group (F(3, 91) = 0.092, p = 0.943, partial η² = 0.009)
  - No significant interaction between group and time on the 'imagery' and 'self-talk' subscales.

- 2 x 4 ANOVAs conducted on each of the subscales revealed significant interactions between group and time on three months and six months (POST1) (F(1,93) = 4.44, p = 0.038)

Conclusions

- An online sport psychology education module can have a positive impact on the attitudes and behaviours of qualified physiotherapists working in sport.
- Physiotherapists can offer basic 'frontline' sport psychology support, supported by referral to a sport psychologist.
- No CPD opportunities addressing the psychological aspects of sports injury are currently available to qualified physiotherapists in the UK.
- Such CPD opportunities are needed to help injured athletes access the sport psychology support they need to cope with injury.
- A model of good practice in the integration of sport psychology education into physiotherapy is needed (see next slide)

Model of good practice in the delivery of sport psychology education for Sports Injury Rehabilitation Professionals (SIRPs) (Heaney et al.)
References


