Bringing Sport Psychology into Physiotherapy

Conference or Workshop Item

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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):
    (i) understanding the psychological impact of injury
    (ii) interventions and psychological skill/techniques
    (iii) 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 - AADS 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 (AADS 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 main effect for group (F(1, 129) = 0.299, p = 0.589, partial η² = 0.001)
  - Significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 12.770, p < 0.001, partial η² = 0.297)
  - Significant interaction between time and group (F(3, 91) = 2.930, p = 0.043, partial η² = 0.065)

- Follow-up significant effect analyses revealed:
  - A 2 x 4 ANOVA conducted on the 'sport psychology' subscale revealed:
    - Significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 34.198, p < 0.001, partial η² = 0.292)
    - No significant main effect for group (F(3, 91) = 0.619, p = 0.593, partial η² = 0.007)
    - No significant interaction between time and group (F(3, 91) = 0.617, p = 0.617, partial η² = 0.007)

- A 2 x 4 ANOVAs conducted on each of the subscales revealed significant interactions between group and time on the 'imagery' 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)**

- Hypothesis = There will be a significant difference in physiotherapists' sport psychology related behaviours before and after (immediately, three-months and six-months) studying a sport psychology education module.

- Accepted – PIUS total scores changed significantly over time for the physiotherapists who studied the sport psychology module.

- Hypothesis = There will be a significant difference in physiotherapists' behaviour between the control group and the intervention group.

- Rejected – although the intervention group showed greater levels of improvement than the control group they were not statistically significant.

- Physiotherapists exposed to sport psychology through the questionnaire?

- High baseline scores?

- However, significant differences were seen between the groups on the sport psychology subscale.

- Possible ceiling effect on the other subscales which were more familiar (e.g. motivation)

- Module content most strongly related to this subscales

**Conclusions**

- An online sport psychology education module can have a positive impact on the attitudes and behaviour 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).

**Thank you for listening...**

Any questions?
## References


