Bringing Sport Psychology into Physiotherapy

Conference or Workshop Item

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Version: Supplementary Material

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Bringing Sport Psychology into Physiotherapy

Dr Caroline Heaney
School of Education, Childhood, Youth & Sport
The Open University

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 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)

- A 2 x 4 (group x time) ANOVA conducted on the PIUS total score data revealed:
  - A significant interaction between intervention group and time on the 'imagery' and 'self-talk' subscales, but not on the 'goal-setting' and 'pain tolerance' subscales.
  - PIUS total scores changed significantly over time for both the intervention and the control group.

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?

Contact details
Email: caroline.heaney@open.ac.uk
Tel: 01908-653703
Twitter: @caheaney
@OU_Sport
Blog: http://www.open.ac.uk/blogs/OU-Sport/
https://caroline735.wordpress.com/
References


