Bringing Sport Psychology into Physiotherapy

Conference 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

I don’t really integrate much sport psychology into my practice
I need more training in sport psychology
Psychology is a really important part of sports injury rehabilitation

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 skills/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)

Method - 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

- Hypothesis = There will be a significant difference in attitudes towards sport psychology before and after (immediately, three-months and six-months) studying a sport psychology education module
- Hypothesis = There will be a significant difference in attitudes towards sport psychology between the control group and the intervention group

Online questionnaire package completed 4 times:
- Pre-study
- Immediately post-study
- Three months post-study
- Six months post-study

Questionnaire package measured:
- Attitudes toward sport psychology
- Attitudes about imagery survey (AIS; Hamson-Utley et al., 2008) – 6 subscales (communication, social support, motivation, attentiveness, relationship & sport psychology)
- Sport psychology related behaviour (use of sport psychology related strategies)
- Psychology of injury usage survey (PIUS; Stiller-Ostrowski et al., 2009) – 4 subscales (imagery, positive self-talk, goal-setting and pain tolerance)
- Perceived use of sport psychology
- Sport psychological referral
- Perceptions of module (rating, likes/dislikes)
- Motivation for further study

Module engagement was also measured:
- Completion of module assessments (1 per unit)
- Participation in module forum (embedded within module activities)
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) = 1.831, p = 0.147, partial η² = 0.037)
  - No significant main effect for group (F(3, 91) = 1.831, p = 0.147, partial η² = 0.037)
  - A significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 34.193, p < 0.001, partial η² = 0.530)

Follow-up significant effect analyses revealed:
- AAIS total scores changed significantly over time for the intervention (sport psychology) group (F(3, 279) = 57.80, p = 0.001, partial η² = 0.617)
- A significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 46.874, p < 0.001, partial η² = 0.567)
- No significant main effect for group (F(3, 91) = 1.831, p = 0.147, partial η² = 0.037)
- No significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 1.831, p = 0.147, partial η² = 0.037)

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) = 6.83, p = 0.010)
  - No significant main effect for group (F(3, 91) = 0.036, p = 0.850, partial η² = 0.005)
  - A significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 48.874, p < 0.001, partial η² = 0.530)

Follow-up significant effect analyses revealed:
- PIUS total scores changed significantly over time for both the intervention group (F(3, 279) = 37.80, p = 0.001) and the control group (F(3, 279) = 19.88, p = 0.001)
- No significant main effect for group (F(3, 91) = 0.036, p = 0.850, partial η² = 0.005)
- A significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 1.831, p = 0.147, partial η² = 0.037)

Follow-up significant effect analyses revealed:
- PIUS sport psychology subscale scores changed significantly over time for both the intervention group (F(3, 279) = 9.71, p = 0.001) and the control group (F(3, 279) = 1.49, p = 0.219)
- There was a significant difference between the two groups immediately following the completion of the modules (POST1) (F(1,93) = 4.44, p = 0.038)

Findings - Conclusions

● 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.
- In contrast to attitude scores PIUS scores increased at each data collection point – possibly indicative of a period of assimilation being required to absorb the information and gain confidence in applying it in their practice.

● Hypothesis = There will be a significant difference in physiotherapists’ sport psychology related behaviours 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.
- Control group exposed to sport psychology through the questionnaire?
- High base score?
- 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 subscale.

Thank you for listening…

Any questions?

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