Bringing Sport Psychology into Physiotherapy

Conference or Workshop Item

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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

"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

The Study

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)

Method

- 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 (AAS, Hamson-Utley et al., 2008) – 6 subscales
  - Sport psychology related behaviour (use of sport psychology related strategies)
  - Psychology of injury usage survey (PIUS, Stiller-Ostrowski et al., 2009) – 4 subscales
  - Perceived use of sport psychology
  - Perception 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

- 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) = 1.381, p = 0.247, partial $\eta^2 = 0.057$)
  - No significant main effect for group (F(2, 91) = 0.036, p = 0.842, partial $\eta^2 = 0.005$)
  - No significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 12.210, p < 0.001, partial $\eta^2 = 0.287$)
- A significant interaction between time and group (F(3, 91) = 2.932, p = 0.043, partial $\eta^2 = 0.065$)

- Follow-up significant effect analyses revealed:
  - AAIS total scores changed significantly over time for the intervention (sport psychology) group (F(3, 279) = 9.71, p < 0.001), but not for the control group (F(3, 279) = 1.90, 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)

- 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.
  - 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 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 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 subscale

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)

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/

Thank you for listening…

Any questions?
References


