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 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)

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) = 1.23, p = 0.326)
  - significant main effect for group (F(3, 91) = 12.23, p < 0.001, partial η² = 0.287)
  - significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 2.92, p = 0.043, partial η² = 0.287)
  - significant interaction between time and group (F(3, 91) = 2.92, p = 0.043, partial η² = 0.085)

- **Follow-up significant effect analyses revealed:**
  - AAIS total scores changed significantly over time for the intervention (sport psychology) group (F(3, 270) = 9.71, p = 0.001)
  - No significant interaction between time and group (F(3, 270) = 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)

- **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**

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 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 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

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) = 1.831, p = 0.147, partial η² = 0.057)
  - No significant main effect for group (F(3, 91) = 0.026, p = 0.890, partial η² = 0.001)
  - A significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 34.193, p < 0.001, partial η² = 0.530)

- **A 2 x 4 ANOVA conducted on the ‘sport psychology’ subscale revealed:**
  - A significant interaction between time and group (F(3, 91) = 5.256, p = 0.002, partial η² = 0.148)
  - No significant main effect for group (F(3, 91) = 1.592, p = 0.210, partial η² = 0.017)
  - A significant main effect for time (F(3, 91) = 48.874, p < 0.001, partial η² = 0.617)

- **Follow-up significant effect analyses revealed:**
  - PIUS sport psychology subscale scores changed significantly over time for both the intervention group (F(3, 270) = 57.80, p = 0.001) and the control group (F(3, 270) = 19.68, p = 0.001)
  - Of the four data collection points there was a significant difference between the two groups at one point – three months after the completion of the modules (POST2) (F(1,93) = 8.83, p = 0.010)

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?

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