RELATIONSHIPS OF STUDENT OUTCOMES TO SCHOOL-BASED PHYSICAL THERAPY SERVICES

PT COUNTS Study

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Summary / Overview

Physical therapy as a related service in schools contributes to the educational programming of students in the least restricted environment, enhancing students’ successful participation in school and community activities leading to further education, employment and independence. Limited research has been conducted on school-based physical therapist practice. We are conducting an exploratory research project to accurately describe the outcomes that students achieve when receiving physical therapy services within schools and the relationship of physical therapy services to those outcomes. No causal relationship can be inferred by this exploratory study, but associations may be analyzed and potential further study trends may be identified.

Primary Objective

The primary objective of this study is to identify associations between physical therapy services and current student educational outcomes in adaptive and functional performance, which includes participation in school activities, self-care, posture and mobility, and recreation/fitness. Knowing relationships between student outcomes and physical therapy services, as currently provided in schools, will influence physical therapy practice, future research, and professional development.

In a sample from diverse regions across the nation, during one school year, for students with disabilities receiving physical therapy services we will describe the changes in:

1. Students’ “participation in school activity” outcomes and the relationship of this change to the identified characteristics of school-based physical therapy services.
2. Students’ “self-care” outcomes and the relationship of this change to the identified characteristics of school-based physical therapy services.
3. Students’ “postural and mobility” outcomes and the relationship of this change to the identified characteristics of school-based physical therapy services.
4. Students’ “recreation and fitness” outcomes and the relationship of this change to the identified characteristics of school-based physical therapy services.

Research Plan

We are employing a observational study design to identify student adaptive and functional performance outcomes and the relationship of these outcomes to school-based physical therapy service delivery models, activities, procedures, and dosage. One hundred thirteen school-based physical therapists followed 306 students enrolled in Kindergarten through sixth grade. Each therapist followed at least one student for at least 22 weeks during the 2012 – 2013 school year. Child demographic information was collected via a parent-completed student demographic
questionnaire. Therapist demographic information was collected via a therapist-completed therapist demographic questionnaire. Student performance at the beginning and end of the study was measured through achievement in individualized goal attainment scaling (GAS) goals and student performance on selected subsections of the School Function Assessment (SFA). Throughout the school year, therapists used the School Physical Therapy Interventions for Pediatrics (SPTIP) data form to monitor and report provided services on a weekly basis. The SPTIP data form collects information about service delivery models, time spent in various activities, and type of intervention procedures used. Data analysis will include calculation of associations among student outcomes in adaptive, developmental, and functional performance and current physical therapy practices.

Impact

This exploratory project will accurately describe the outcomes that students achieve when receiving physical therapy services within schools and the relationship of physical therapy intervention to those outcomes. Hypotheses based on pilot work related to physical therapy service delivery models and dosage will be specifically tested. Service delivery models, activities, procedures, and dosage are malleable factors that can be changed. No causal relationship can be inferred by this exploratory study, but associations can be analyzed and further study trends proposed. We believe that the results from this study will generate valuable information for understanding current physical therapy school-based services and for developing plausible hypotheses to efficiently guide future experimental studies.

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Participating Sites

The study is been conducted through a collaboration among: University of Kentucky, Drexel University, University of Washington, and University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center. Numerous schools and school systems have partnered with our research team to assist with subject recruitment and data collection.

Related Link

University of Kentucky College of Health Sciences
http://www.mc.uky.edu/healthsciences/grants/ptcounts/

Contact Us

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