

Presentation 3- Impact of OT fatigue on client care (part 2) Natasha Till MScOT student

Increasing the fatigue-related occupational health and safety knowledge base of regulated occupational therapists in Alberta, Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists in partnership with Alberta Human Services, Occupational Health and Safety Program, Government of Alberta
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The accompanying audio-visual presentation explores the impact of workplace fatigue on patient care with a specific focus on **decision making and patient safety**

Decision-making is a complex process that requires multiple steps and integration of information. To make a clinically sound decision one must take into account the client, the context, the various external environments the client has (physical, social, cultural), and the best evidence. Fatigue can lead to occupational therapists experiencing **cognitive impairments** which can negatively affect the ability for a clinician to engage in the decision-making process.

Some of the features of decision-making that can become **impaired by fatigue** include: concentration, emotional balance and affect, problem solving, ability to acquire and apply new learning, memory recall and reaction time. When these features are impaired the steps in the decision-making process suffer. For instance fatigue related impairments could limit what information (verbal and nonverbal) therapists are attentive to from clients, the OT's ability to recall memories of what the client may have said and their ability to communicate with clients and their inter-professional team.

Patient safety can also be negatively impacted by workplace fatigue. Fatigue impairs work performance which can lead to an **increase in errors**. Studies of nurses and medical residents have shown that fatigue can lead to an increase in medication errors, missed observations, poor team mechanics, and **poor communication**.

Within occupational therapy the most common cited mistakes are; misjudgment, lack of preparation, lack of experience, lack of knowledge, and insufficient communication. Fatigue can contribute to misjudgement, lack of preparation and insufficient communication.

The accompanying audio-video also describes the importance of recognizing fatigue in yourself and other in more detail. When people are fatigued they have an impaired ability to recognize their performance deficits. Various methods that can help with recognizing and having insight into fatigue related issues include formal fatigue risk assessment, sleep diaries, sleep apps, and using a team-based approach. Other steps that can be used to decrease the risk of working while under the influence of fatigue (also discussed in the audio-visual presentation) include both individual activities (e.g. improving your sleep hygiene, taking breaks, not taking back-to-back shifts) and work-based changes (e.g. developing a consensus on what constitutes a safe shift, and create a workplace culture that respects fatigue reduction and management).

Links to the American, Canadian and Australian Sleep foundations are included below. These resources, framed through an occupational therapy perspective, can be used as an educational tool for occupational therapists, team members and managers. Other relevant resource are provided at the end of the accompanying audio-visual presentation

Key resources

1. Canadian National Sleep Foundation: <http://o.canada.com/tag/national-sleep-foundation>
2. Australian Sleep Health Foundation: <http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au/>
3. American Sleep Association: <http://www.sleepassociation.org/>
4. Buus-Frank, M.E. (2005). Practicing Under the Influence of Fatigue (PUIF): A Wake-Up Call for Patients and Providers. *Advances in Neonatal Care*, 5(2), 55-61. doi:10.1016/j.adnc.2005.02.001
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