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Community-based Rehabilitation in the Dominican Republic: Efficacy of an Occupation-based Training Program for Community Rehabilitation Workers and Parents of Children with Disabilities.

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The Dominican Republic has limited therapy services for children with disabilities. Community-based rehabilitation programs attempt to provide these services to impoverished communities throughout the DR. Limited resources are available for rehabilitation workers in these settings to increase their knowledge of therapy principles and interventions. The purpose of this study is to test the efficacy of an occupation-based seating and positioning training program for community rehabilitation workers and parents of children with disabilities.

Research questions answered during the study include: 1) Is this study effective in improving the knowledge base of the participants on occupation-based seating and positioning children with disabilities? 2) Do any demographic factors influence the participant's test scores as measured by the pre, post, and two-month follow up tests? 3) Are the participants satisfied with this program?

A pre- post-test design as well as a satisfaction survey were utilized to gather data. Two, 2-3 hour training sessions were provided with a total of 28 participants. A two-month follow-up post-test and satisfaction survey were administered to demonstrate carry-over of material from the training program. The results of this study concluded that the training program was an effective method to improve participant's knowledge. Significant changes in pre-test, post-test and two-month follow-up test scores demonstrate the efficacy of this program. In addition, 92% of written comments on the satisfaction survey were positive.

This research demonstrates the importance and need for occupational therapy services in developing countries, as well as cultural issues that arise when providing these services. In addition, very few studies have been conducted by occupational therapists in developing countries, in particular, the Dominican Republic. This study shows that a small training program can make a large impact for communities such as the ones affected by this training program.