

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN PSYCHOSEXUAL THERAPY SERVICES

Institute Psychosexual Medicine annual scientific meeting

Occupational therapists (OTs), with our dual training in physical and mental health, are ideally placed to provide therapeutic support and intervention to improve quality of life in relation to sexual dysfunction (Andamo, 1980; Young et al, 2020). Yet, there is little research in the literature on OTs working in psychosexual services. An 8-week placement at Axess was sought to further explore this.



(BAUM, CHRISTIANSEN & BASS, 2024).

Interoception refers to the body's ability to sense internal states (pain, stress and emotional regulation; Craig, 2003). Dysfunctional interoception may contribute to altered pain perception (Di Lernia, Serino & Riva, 2016).

“Interoception helps us to understand the science and further legitimises the need for therapy”

Development of an OT intervention for pain management:

3 male pelvic pain patients were offered 4-5 sessions which included:

- Assessment and goal setting. ROMs included: PHQ-9, GAD-7, MAIA-2, and NIH-CPSI.
- Psychoeducation on pain, interoception and the fight, flight, freeze, fawn response.
- Stress management strategies.
- Mindfulness and breathing exercises.

Patient outcomes and examples of changes to functioning:

86% average improvement in goals after 1 month

Reduction in anxiety and depression scores by **50%**

2 - 8.15 Hours of sleep on CPAP machine

Step count increase by **50%**

Occupational Therapy has a valuable role in psychosexual therapy services, particularly in supporting individuals with chronic pain. By addressing interoceptive dysfunction, promoting stress management, and enhancing quality of life, OT interventions can contribute to a holistic approach to sexual health care.

References

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