

Survey of the current status of education in vocational rehabilitation at hospitals and the undergraduate program for occupational therapy in Niigata prefecture

Toyohiro Hamaguchi, Masato Kaifuchi and Mineo Oyama

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Abstract

A description of education in occupational therapy (OT), in a sample of 4 colleges in Niigata prefecture (2003-2004) with vocational therapy for disabilities was assessed by mail survey. The survey requested syllabus information, non-patient practices and lectures with introductions in programs for OT students. Respondents were asked for their current syllabus in vocational therapy and teaching methods in college in comparison to hospitals. Additionally, we asked departments of occupational therapy in major hospitals in Niigata prefecture for assessment methods for vocational rehabilitation which were usually used.

Results indicated that current items of vocational evaluation for patients in hospitals were different from programs in colleges. General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB) and YG Personality Index (YGPI) were used in all hospitals and colleges. Kohs Block Design Test and Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) were not used in programs for students but were used in hospitals. Although Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI), Tokyo University Egogram (TEG) and Allen cognitive performance test were taught to students in college, no hospital in Niigata used these tests.

The current status of education programs in vocational therapy illustrated some differences between hospitals and colleges. These results suggest that different contents were given to students at the college in vocational evaluation compared with clinical practice. Faculties might have to consider changing curriculum and syllabi in vocational therapy for clinical practice in Niigata. If assessment items could be useful for clinical practice, the faculty should inform clinical colleagues who can use it appropriately for the patient's evaluation.

Introduction

There were 38,000 occupational therapists (OT) in Japan, treating disabilities in physical activity, psychosocial activity, activities of daily living (ADL) and social activities, especially in the occupational fields, in 2007. The role of the occupational therapist¹ includes work-oriented treatment in an acute care setting², job analysis, work tolerance screening, work capacity evaluation, work hardening, and job market re-entry management in work evaluation and community settings^{3,4}. However, there are few occupational therapists working in vocational adaptation fields for disabilities.

The Ministry of Labor has had jurisdiction over

Department of Occupational Therapy, Niigata University of Health and Welfare, Graduate School of Health Science, Niigata, Japan
1398 Shimami, Niigata City, Niigata, Japan 950-3198
Tel&Fax +81-25-257-4447
E-mail: hamaguti@nuhw.ac.jp
Corresponding Author: Toyohiro Hamaguchi

the practice of vocational rehabilitation in Japan since the 1960's. Occupational therapy was regulated in those days by the Ministry of Health and Welfare. The Japanese Association of Occupational Therapists (JAOT) was established in 1966, and established and holds courses of OT related to vocation rehabilitation every year and recognizes it as an important field in OT.

About 300 OT's are working in Niigata prefecture and occupational therapy education has been provided at four colleges in Niigata prefecture since 2001. Educational programs of OT have adopted the philosophy of helping clients back into work, through structured vocational rehabilitation schemes. OT's are usually evaluating and training clients to return to work using verified assessment tools and some unverified observation methods. Of course, OT students are learning about vocational support and technical assessment methods in their own colleges.

OT faculties are expected to provide appropriate clinical methods to students.

It is uncertain whether methods of support in education and vocation between college programs and clinical fields are similar. There are no published results of educational status in vocational rehabilitation services for OT students in the Niigata. To clarify the current status of education in OT programs, we investigated the assessment tools that are used in hospitals for patients to evaluate occupation index and tools used for educational methods in college programs.

Methods

In January 2005, questionnaires regarding the conduct of vocational rehabilitation were mailed to departments associated with rehabilitation at 2 accredited hospitals by the Japan Council for Quality Health Care and all 4 colleges offering OT programs for undergraduates in Niigata prefecture. The content of the survey consisted of 1) evaluation methods of vocational

rehabilitation for patients in hospitals and education for students in colleges, 2) teaching or evaluating through these items (see appendix).

Results

Valid replies were obtained from 6 (100.0%) of the 6 institutions in the local area. All respondents were occupational therapists. In addition, no item was common to all facilities as an assessment tool.

Micro Tower Method (MTM) and Modular Arrangement of Predetermined Time Standards (MODAPTS) ⁵ were taught to students of OT in all colleges, but were not used with patients in hospitals. Kohs Block Design Test and Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) were used in hospitals but no program for students in vocational rehabilitation colleges taught these methods. Vocational Preference Inventory (VPI), Tokyo University Egogram (TEG) and Allen cognitive performance test were not used for evaluation of patients of vocational rehabilitation in hospitals (Table 1).

Discussion

In this study a survey targeting educational institutions in Niigata prefecture was conducted in order to determine the current status of programs for undergraduate students in vocational rehabilitation. The results showed that assessment methods and tools in vocational rehabilitation for patients in hospitals were different from those taught in colleges for students. Seven vocational assessment items for patients have been used in both hospitals and in approximately 50% of the faculties in colleges in 2005. Thus, a difference of assessment methods in vocational rehabilitation was found between hospitals and colleges in Niigata prefecture. These differences may have their cause in the background history of relevant authorities.

Vocational rehabilitation has been performed in vocational schools which were managed by the Ministry of Labor in Japan from the 1960's. An

Table 1. Assessment items for patient's vocational rehabilitation in hospitals and college programs in Niigata

Assessment Scales	Hospital	College
General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB)	2 (100%)	3 (75%)
YG Personality Index (YGPI)	2 (100%)	3 (75%)
Vocational Readiness Test (VRT)	2 (100%)	2 (50%)
Analysis of Behavior and Work	2 (100%)	2 (50%)
Kraepelin Task and Performance	2 (100%)	1 (25%)
Kohs Block Design Test	2 (100%)	0 (0%)
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)	2 (100%)	0 (0%)
Micro Tower Method	1 (50%)	4 (100%)
Analysis of Occupation	1 (50%)	1 (25%)
Modular Arrangement of Predetermined Time Standards (MODAPTS)	1 (50%)	4 (100%)
Vocational Preference Inventory*	0 (0%)	2 (50%)
Tokyo University Egogram	0 (0%)	1 (25%)
Allen cognitive performance test	0 (0%)	1 (25%)

*Vocational Preference Inventory: A personality-interest inventory composed entirely of occupational titles. People complete the inventory by indicating the occupations they like or dislike and the complex clusters of personal characteristics which the inventory assesses yields a broad range of information about interests, interpersonal relationships, values, self-conceptions, coping behaviors, and identifications. The inventory has 11 scales: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, Conventional, Self-Control, Masculinity-Femininity, Status, Infrequency, and Acquiescence.

OT performed vocational training for clients to return to work as prevocational therapy. Currently, even if the importance of occupational rehabilitation is recognized, there are few OT's working in the vocational domain in Japan. There are few teachers of occupational therapy with knowledge of vocational rehabilitation at colleges. Therefore, assessment methods and tools may have been different between OT and vocational school in vocational skills training and evaluation methods.

MTM and MODAPTS were taught to students of OT in all colleges, but are not in use for patients in hospitals. MTM and MODAPTS are methods using predetermined time standards to assess physical disabilities^{5,6}. Another new scale meets modern psychometric requirements for measurement and presents an opportunity in routine clinical practice to take positive action to

prevent job loss⁷.

Depending on the current educational status in colleges, lectures of vocational rehabilitation aim to provide these education benefits: (a) guidance for students, (b) equip students for work with patients, (c) involvement in voluntary work, (d) education, or (e) instruct concerning laws for worker^{1,8}. Therapists specializing in the rehabilitation of persons with upper extremity disorders -hand therapists- have developed an evaluation procedure to determine if and when an injured worker has the physical capacity to safely return to work^{9,10}. The implementation of return to work evaluation has allowed injured workers to maintain optimal function after medical treatment^{7,11,12}.

This study involved OT's in Niigata's prefecture-related institutions, only 4 colleges and a few hospitals were targeted in this survey, thus

this point can be cited as a limitation of this study. An OT has an important role in vocational rehabilitation. It is necessary to perform fact-finding of OT's in Japan and other countries for vocational rehabilitation in the future.

The current status of education programs in vocational therapy demonstrated some differences between hospitals and colleges. These results suggest that different items and/or methods were given to students compared with clinical practice at colleges in vocational evaluation in Niigata. Faculties might have to consider changing curriculum and syllabi in vocational therapy for clinical practice at Niigata. If assessment items may be useful for clinical practice, faculties should inform clinical colleagues and they can use it appropriately for patient's evaluation.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Please give the syllabi of all lectures / practice about “vocational rehabilitation” in your college to us. In addition, please write in the following how you are lecturing or what you do to make the student actually experience the items, or introduce the textbook.

Please check () in the table below what methods you are using as evaluation items in vocational rehabilitation for clients.

Assessment Scales	
General Aptitude Test Battery (GATB)	()
YG Personality Index (YGPI)	()
Vocational Readiness Test (VRT)	()
Analysis of Behavior and Work	()
Kraepelin Task and Performance	()
Kohs Block Design Test	()
Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS)	()
Micro Tower Method	()
Analysis of Occupation	()
Modular Arrangement of Predetermined Time Standards (MODAPTS)	()
Vocational Preference Inventory*	()
Tokyo University Egogram	()
Allen cognitive performance test	()
Others:	()

Thank you for your cooperation.