

How paediatric therapists can use teachers' perceptions to improve coordination programmes



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Outline of presentation

- Rationale for study
- Methodology
- Results
- Recommendations

Rationale for Study

- Prevalence of Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD) is 5 - 8% of childhood population (Polatajko et al., 1995)
- Long term effects of DCD on 10 year follow up include both significant motor difficulties as well as a variety of other psychological problems (Losse et al., 1991, Smythe and Anderson, 2000)
- It is the responsibility of the teacher in the first instance to meet the child's needs within the school's resources (Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice for Wales, Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), 2004)

Pressure on Paediatric OT services

- Historically, Dunford and Richards (2003) determined that the mean waiting times for a child with DCD to receive an OT assessment was 46 weeks.
- WAG (2007) set a directive to reduce this waiting time to 14 weeks by March 2009.
- Therefore paediatric OTs faced a difficult dilemma: how to provide prompt, effective intervention with limited resources

Dilemmas

- Teachers could be assisted by OTs to give timely and appropriate help to these children, only referring the more complex cases
- However, from experience, teachers often do not offer this assistance and recommendations are not followed through.
- This raises many questions as to why support is not used.
 - Are teachers just too busy?
 - Do they not really understand the programmes?
 - Do they think these issues are not really that important?
 - Are the programmes presented in a format that are useful to teachers?
 - Are teachers' concerns listened to, and their views respected?

Research Question

- What needs to be considered from a teacher's perspective before programme material is recommended, selected or adapted for their use by OTs to assist children with coordination difficulties in a school setting?



Aim of project

- To explore teachers' perceptions of their role in assisting children with coordination difficulties in a school setting
- To identify the type of programme material that is most appropriate to assist teachers in this role.



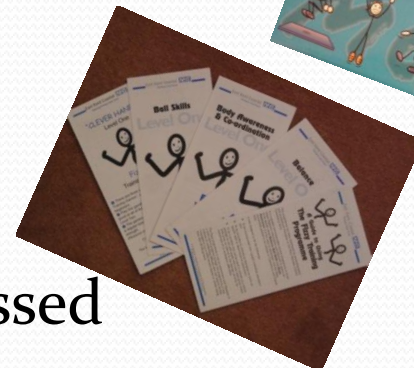
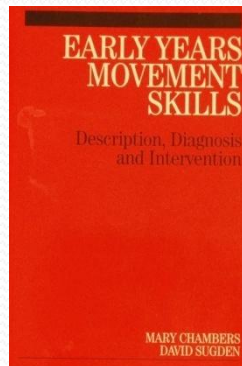
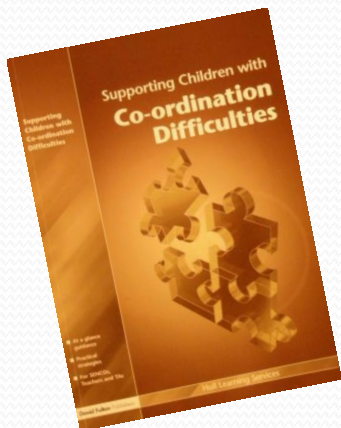
Methodology

- Qualitative methodology selected (Patton, 2002).
- Focus groups chosen as method of data gathering (Krueger and Casey, 2000). These were held over a period of 4 months with 7 teachers from mainstream education who volunteered to be involved following my appeal at a SENCo meeting.



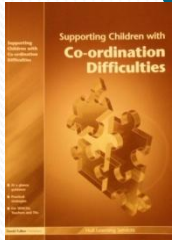
Focus Groups

- First group: Explored teachers' perceptions of the difficulties children with DCD face and their views on their role
- Second group: Explored themes that arose from first
- Third group: Discussed views of programmes issued



- Fourth group: Reviewed issues discussed

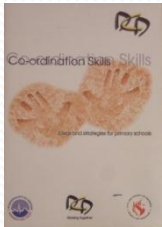
Programmes evaluated



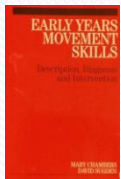
- **Supporting Children with Coordination Difficulties** by Coulter, S., Kynman, L. and Morling, E. (2005) London: David Fulton Publishers.



Smart Moves: Motor Skills Development Programme by Drew, S. (2006). Usk: Smart CC Publishing.



Coordination Skills by Samuel, C., Gadd, W., Griffiths, et al., (2005). Swansea: Swansea NHS Trust and City and County of Swansea.



- **Early Years Movement Skills: Description, Diagnosis and Intervention** by Chambers, M. and Sugden, D. (2006). *Early Years Movement Skills: Description, Diagnosis and Intervention*. London: Whurr.



- **Fizzy Training programme** by Eastern and Coastal Kent Primary Care Trust (2003). Canterbury: Eastern and Coastal NHS Primary Care Trust.

Data analysis

- Focus groups were transcribed and the data analysed using Nvivo (2007) computer package to manage the data (Dey, 1993; Bazeley, 2007)
- Codes were generated, and analysed into broader themes that linked them (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Results

- Five main themes emerged:
 - The complexity of recognising and understanding coordination difficulties
 - Personal and organisational influences on teachers' perception of their role in responding to children with coordination difficulties
 - Obstacles to teachers fulfilling their perceived role in helping children with coordination difficulties
 - Teachers' perceptions and experience of programmes and materials
 - Attitudes to occupational therapist

First Theme: The complexity of recognising and understanding coordination difficulties

- Difficulty identifying coordination difficulties
- Age and stage of child affects teachers' ability to recognise coordination difficulties
- Coordination difficulties not taken seriously

I think what might possibly happen is that you've got a child who is keeping at maintenance level within the mainstream school and they have coordination difficulties they might be overlooked because they are not in school terms a problem.

Theme two: Personal and organisational influences on teachers' perception of their role in responding to children with coordination difficulties

- Personal factors: Lack of confidence and attitudes

Traditionally I think in mainstream, ... we've thought of it as somebody else's problem... they've referred so it's out of their hands and somebody else's responsibility..

It's quite an easy problem to hide.

I think the frustration comes when you don't know what to do next.

- Organisational Factors: Such as the role of the SENCo, level of support from LSAs, head teachers' leadership style

*Fulltime class is a fulltime class.
If you have a fulltime class you
don't in theory and in practice
have time for anything else.*

*It depends ... what value the head teacher puts on
special needs in the school and how the special
needs budget is spent.*

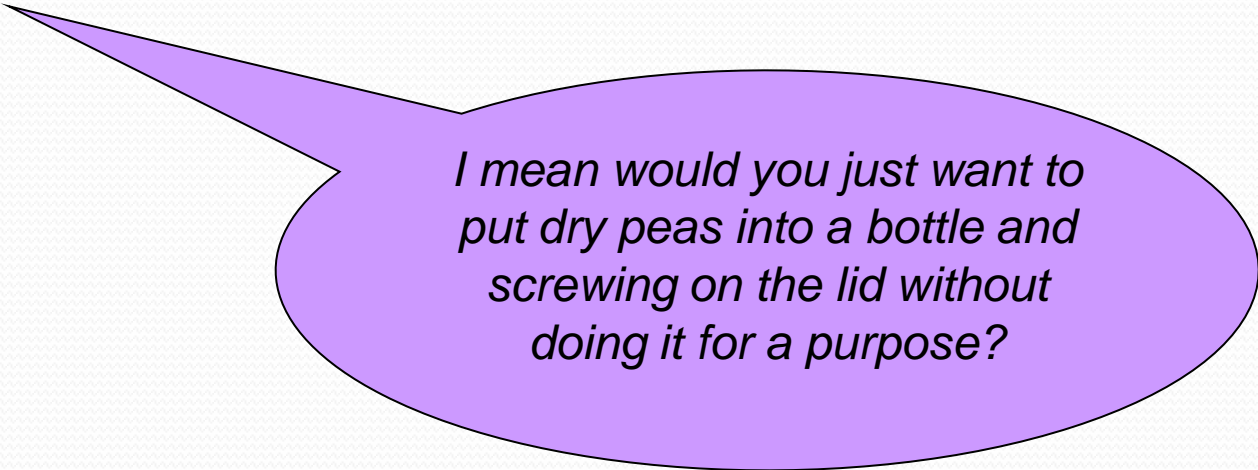
Theme Three: Obstacles to teachers fulfilling their perceived role in helping children with coordination difficulties

- Lack of Training
- Practical obstacles e.g. not having sufficient time, a lack of access to resources and materials when they needed them, and difficulty finding a suitable venue for intervention activities.
- Pressures on teaching staff to fulfil multiple roles
- Red-tape and paperwork

Do you really want to go down the road of recognizing this problem because it means that you've got to write a programme for it...

Theme Four: Teachers' perception and experience of programmes and materials

- Layout and packaging of programme material - simplicity, attractiveness
- Content – practical, manageable, and purposeful, for the whole class, needed to fit into the curriculum



I mean would you just want to put dry peas into a bottle and screwing on the lid without doing it for a purpose?

Theme Five: Attitudes to OT

- Factors affecting referral to OT – organisational issues, and attitudes to impact of coordination difficulties
- Factors impacting collaborative work between teachers and OTs: Respect, and relationship building

Even if the OT were to spend half an hour, with the class teacher, that would give them so much more information and help. ...[the face to face time] will cut your [the OT] list and help teachers to feel confident to deal with the child in the school as well.

Recommendations

- Therapists need to concentrate on relationship building with teachers to ensure successful collaborative work and to help build teacher's confidence. Simplified access to therapists (less red-tape) and availability of advice (phone line/email?) was seen to be important.
- Further training of head teachers, SENCos, teachers and LSAs is needed for both identification and management of children with DCD, as well as education about the long term effects of DCD. This training needs to be improved at both teacher training and CPD levels.
- Therapists need to be more aware of the format and the content of the programmes they recommend, determining the teacher's preferred learning style (visual/ auditory, and type of visual content e.g. use of diagrammes; or more detailed explanations; or use of bullet points etc).

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