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Occupational Therapy-Based Health Promotion for Diabetes and Weight Management in Correctional Facilities

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Background

Chronic diseases, particularly diabetes and obesity, are prevalent in correctional facilities. Factors such as sedentary lifestyles, limited access to resources, and high stress contribute to escalating health care costs and poor health outcomes. Occupational Therapy (OT) provides an evidence-based, holistic framework to address these challenges.

Purpose

This abstract presents an OT-based health promotion program tailored for incarcerated adults managing diabetes and weight issues. By integrating key theoretical models and frames of reference, the program aims to foster sustainable lifestyle changes and reduce the burden of chronic disease.

Theoretical Frameworks and Intervention

Guided by the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO), the Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance (PEOP) model, and supporting frames of reference (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral, Biomechanical, and Lifestyle Redesign®), OT practitioners implement a comprehensive approach focusing on individualized goal setting, education, and skills training. The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) serves as an evidence-based intervention to address diet, exercise, and medication adherence. Interdisciplinary collaboration, environmental modifications (e.g., healthier commissary options, designated exercise areas), and peer support enhance program efficacy.

Results

Preliminary outcomes in correctional facilities that have adopted OT-based health promotion interventions demonstrate improved glycemic control, weight reduction, and decreased medical emergencies. Cost-savings are achieved through reduced off-site medical transports, fewer hospitalizations, and lower reliance on acute care. The long-term impact extends beyond prison walls, as participants develop skills that support community reintegration and reduce recidivism.

Conclusion

Occupational therapy's client-centered, holistic approach addresses the multifaceted health needs of incarcerated individuals. By leveraging established models like MOHO and PEOP, and incorporating evidence-based programs such as the CDSMP, OT practitioners empower inmates to manage diabetes and weight effectively. This approach offers significant benefits, including improved health outcomes, cost savings, and a positive ripple effect on families and communities.