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An Occupation-Based Approach to Postpartum Care: A Pilot Questionnaire

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Introduction

- Occupational disruption is a temporary state of change in the identity of oneself, and the quantity and/or quality of one's occupations.
- Postpartum women undergo a period of occupational disruption following childbirth.
- Addition of new occupations to care for baby such as infant feeding, comforting.
- Occupational therapy has played a limited role in perinatal care.
- Occupational performance is at its peak for both the child and mother when the interaction between the mom, baby, and environment are balanced.

Site Description

- Nova Southeastern University, Tampa Bay Campus – Virtual
- BLOOM Pelvic Therapy and Wellness
 - Outpatient Pelvic Floor Therapy Clinic with locations in South Tampa and Lutz
 - Diagnoses included: bowel/bladder dysfunction, pelvic pain, pelvic organ prolapse, sexual dysfunction, pregnancy and postpartum.

Summary of Needs Assessment

- Currently, there are no occupation-based tools to identify areas of occupational disruption in postpartum mothers.
- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists recommends the postpartum care period be an ongoing assessment of physical, social, and psychological well-being rather than a single provider visit in which is current practice.
- Occupational therapists are well-equipped to treat this population with a holistic, individualized approach.



Figure 3. A Postpartum Mother Holding Her Baby

Literature Review Summary

- Occupational therapy can be an asset to the new mother facing physical dysfunction due to qualitative reports and common themes such as physical recovery, and emotional/ psychological rehabilitation, role transition and patient advocacy (Pollari et al., 2022).
- In the literature, emphasis has been placed on maternal mental health, specifically postpartum depression, and its effect on occupation (Sepulveda, 2019).
- However, Mood & Emotional Wellbeing is only one domain of health concern woman experience in the fourth trimester leaving five domains neglected from intervention from providers as a standard of care (Stuebe et al., 2021).
- 1 in every 3 American women experience physical dysfunction or a pelvic health disorder, with a large portion of these women experiencing disruption following pregnancy and childbirth (Akselrul & Vestal, 2021).

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I felt that I was able to appropriately care for myself upon discharge from the hospital.	1	2	3	4
My 6-week postpartum check-up was informative and beneficial to my participation in daily activities.	1	2	3	4
I have questions that were not addressed or answered within the standard care of postpartum mothers.	1	2	3	4
I found myself searching for answers regarding care for my body after the delivery of my baby/babies.	1	2	3	4
I experience(d) pain during intimacy and/or sexual intercourse following the delivery of my baby/babies.	1	2	3	4
I experience(d) bladder "heaviness," pain in the pelvic area, or bladder leakage after the delivery of my baby/babies.	1	2	3	4

Figure 1. Example of Postpartum Occupational Disruption Questionnaire Items



Figure 2. A Mom Engaging in Exercise with Her Baby

Capstone Project Description

- Postpartum mothers (≤ 12 months) were recruited via social media using a recruitment flyer.
- Data was gathered anonymously online using SurveyMonkey and the Postpartum Occupational Disruption Questionnaire (PODQ)
- The PODQ is a self-administered questionnaire developed to identify occupational disruption in 3 domains categorized by areas of occupation (Health Management, ADLs, or Both).
- Participants ($n=113$), ages 19-45 years ($M= 30.0$, $SD \pm 4.9$), evaluated their postpartum experience using a four-point Likert scale to respond to statements pertaining to occupational engagement during the postpartum period.

Results

- ADL dysfunction:
 - 58% experienced disruption in intimacy
 - 51% in toileting
 - 60% in exercise
 - 68% in return to daily life
- Health management dysfunction:
 - 83% reported searching for answers regarding care for their bodies
 - 55% reported a lack of information or resources
 - 41% were dissatisfied with their overall health
- Physical dysfunction: 53.1% reported symptoms
- 99% agreed that women would benefit from more specialized care during pregnancy and postpartum to address daily occupations.
- 97.3% of participants experienced mild-severe occupational disruption in their postpartum period.

PODQ Occupational Disruption Scores

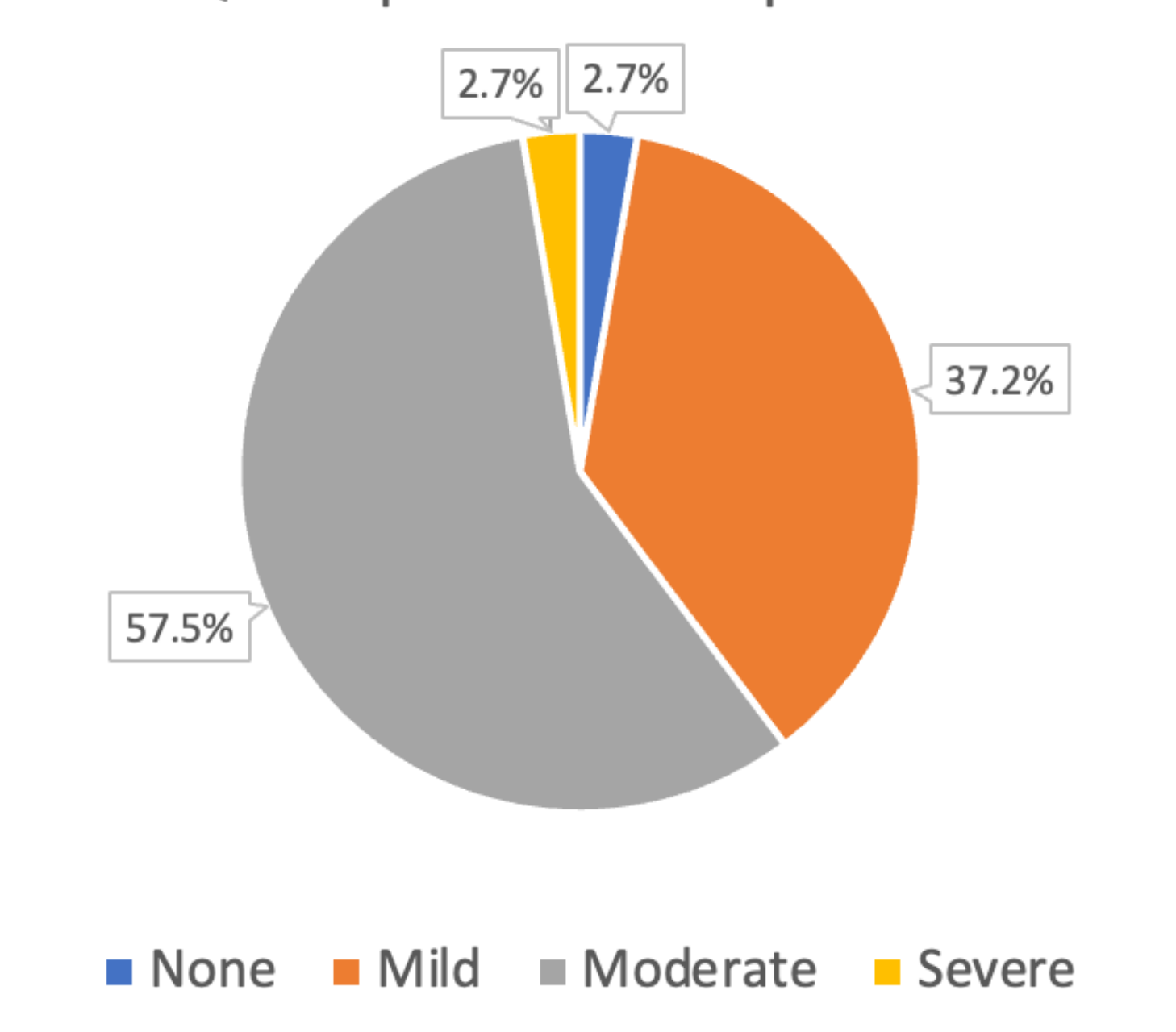


Figure 5. Graphical Representation of Occupational Disruption Total Scores

Learning Objectives Achieved

Developed a pilot questionnaire to identify occupational disruption in ADLs and Health Management occupations.

Identified the prevalence of occupational disruption in postpartum mothers through survey research using a retrospective, cross-sectional design.

Obtained professional education on Female Pelvic Floor Function, Dysfunction, and Treatment.

Gained clinical observation hours and training at BLOOM Pelvic Floor Therapy.

Guided graduate-level student researchers through questionnaire and methodology development.

Implications for OT Practice

- Effective patient education in the perinatal experience may improve outcomes for mother and baby during the period following childbirth.
- This data informs clinicians of areas of occupation that are commonly affected during the transition to motherhood.
- Further research should validate the PODQ as a screening tool for use to identify mothers at risk of occupational disruption.
- Occupational therapists should be utilized as a consultant for postpartum mothers due to the occupational disruption they face.



Figure 4. A Mom Receiving Support with Her Baby

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References Available Upon Request