Oral Defense Announcement  
University of Missouri – St. Louis Graduate School

An oral examination in defense of the dissertation for the degree
Doctor of Nursing Practice with an emphasis as a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner

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B.S. Biology, Limestone College, 2012  
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Evaluation of a DIRFloortime® Program for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Date: Thursday July 8, 2021  
Time: 1:45 p.m. to 2:20 p.m.  
Place: Remote

Abstract

Problem. Parents with children who have neurodevelopmental disorders, such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) experience high levels of parenting stress. The prevalence of ASD is on the rise in the United States. As a result, there has been an increase in the use of treatment modalities for children with ASD, to better understand which modalities have the most positive impact on children and their parents. DIRFloortime® is a developmental treatment modality used to help strengthen the parent-child bond and used to decrease parental-child stress for children diagnosed with ASD. The Autism Parenting Stress Index (APSI) measures the parental stress levels in several domains addressed in the DIRFloortime® program.

Methods. A Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model was utilized, and data was obtained over a three-month period. An observational cohort design was utilized. A purposive sample of parents of children with neurodevelopmental disorders (ASD and ADHD) aged 4 to 14-years-old who were enrolled in the DIRFloortime® program at a small rural midwestern non-profit agency participated.

Results. The total monthly APSI questionnaire scores for each parent decreased an average of six and a half points after three months (N=6).

Implications for Practice. Additional PDSA cycles are needed to assess for efficacy and trends of the DIRFloortime® program. Limitations of this quality improvement project include small sample size and short length of time.

Defense of Dissertation Committee
Cathy Koetting, DNP, APRN, CPNP-PC, PMHS, FNP-C - Chairperson  
Anne Thatcher, DNP, MSW, APRN, PMHNP-BC, LMSW  
Tiffany Tobkin, M.Ed.