

The Inaugural Older Persons Mental Health Occupational Therapy Symposium

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Current practice issue

- Older adults mental health is a specialised area of occupational therapy clinical practice
- Infrequent training and professional development opportunities in older persons MH specifically for OTs
- In-services and training mostly aligned to adult mental health clinical practice
- OTs can use generic approaches rather than targeted evidence based occupational therapy interventions – a clinical 'gap'
- OTs can become clinically isolated and clinical practice can become stale and outdated

Who we serve – clinical population

- Patients over 65 presenting with a serious mental illness
- Life transitions, coping with medical issues, family conflict, financial issues, bereavements can precipitate severe depression
- Degenerative neurological conditions, cognitive decline, suicidal behaviour, behavioural and psychological symptoms of dementia (BPSD) all present practice challenges
- Treatment for older onset >65 years MH diagnoses do not always align with adults mental health treatments
- Mental Health Services for Older Adults (MHSOA) is a specialist service for this clinical population

Group

- OTs working in older persons MH area of clinical practice
- Small numbers in each DHB across older persons inpatient units and in community often work as sole OT in teams of other disciplines

Idea

- To run a symposium dedicated to occupational therapy practice in older persons mental health
- Waitemata DHB MHSOA occupational therapy team and colleagues from Nelson and Hamilton enthusiastic
- Decision to gauge interest in a symposium via email 'flyer' outlining symposium plan

Method

- Flyer designed to gauge interest
- Interest confirmed with supportive replies from OT colleagues practicing in this clinical area
- Concept discussed with MHSOA management
- Venue and date arranged

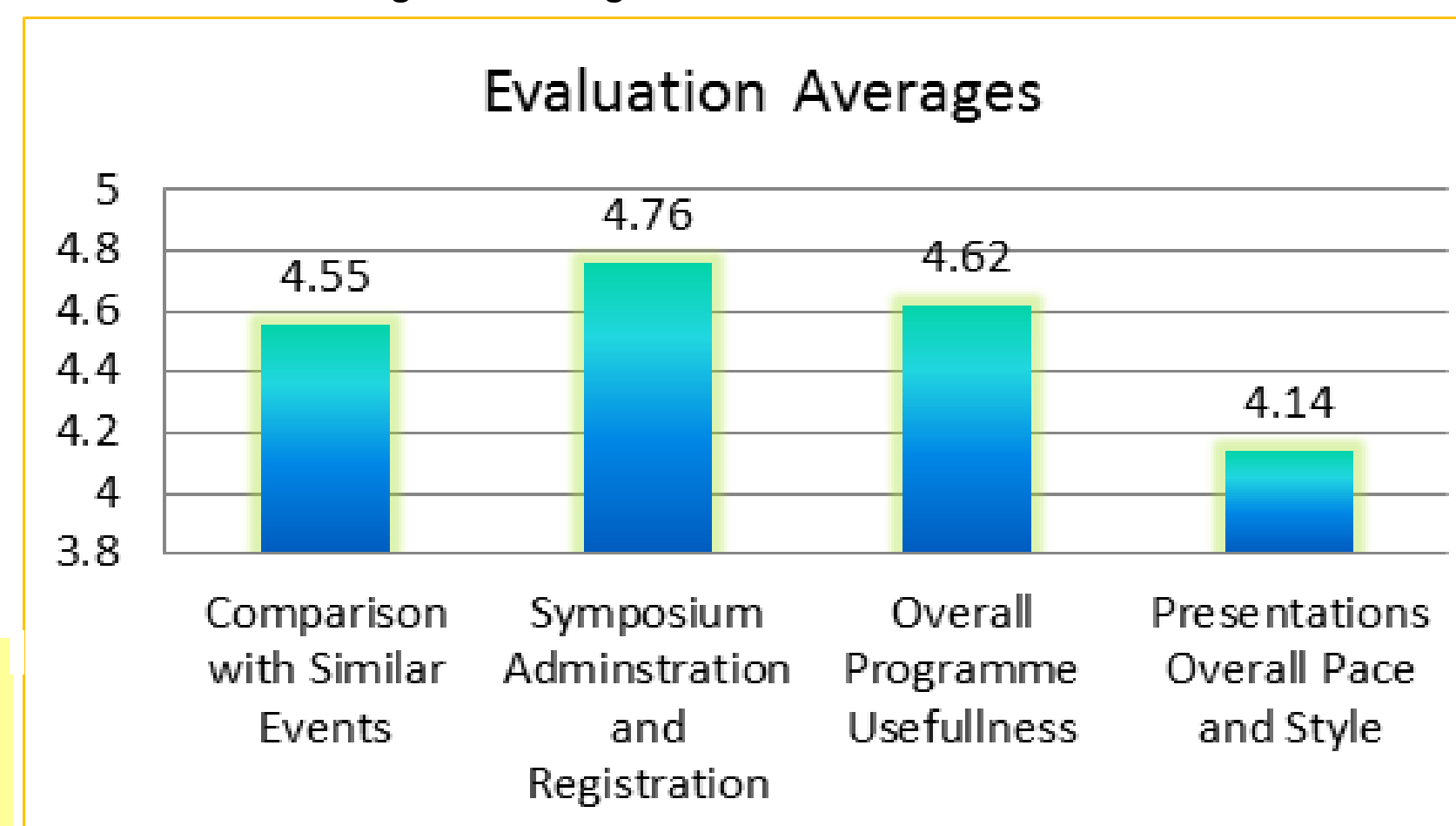
Brainstorm Topics

- Topics supplied from OT clinicians working in this practice area they thought needed developing
- Programme design for symposium to start with an overview of older person MH in NZ then focus on occupational therapy specific interventions in older persons MH



Evaluations and feedback

- 29 participants completed evaluation forms (some had left earlier due to travel reasons)
- Feedback overwhelmingly positive- see table for evaluation average scores. Affirmed that the OT role adds value in older person MH
- All participants wanted on-going specialised professional development opportunities to continue for OTs working in older person's MH
- Feedback from participants, they valued the networking of colleagues working in the same field and wanted a future symposium. A range of topics they wished to be included was provided in feedback
- Suggestions included video conferencing, shortening the day for those who travelled.
- Constructive feedback: the symposium was too long and tried to 'pack too much in'. As some participants stated they would prefer more time for questions and exploring practice issues while networking with colleagues.



Aim

- MHSOA OT group wished to show clinical leadership at a regional and national level with this initiative
- To provide participants with occupational therapy specific intervention evidenced based approaches across main diagnoses in older persons MH
- To support professional development that was tailored to the clinical challenges working in older persons MH
- To have presenters working across clinical practice and university with a carer perspective
- Symposium to be financially viable

Outcome

- The inaugural Older Persons Mental Health Occupational Therapy Symposium was held on 14 November 2016
- Topics (see centre diagram)
- 50 attendees – 40 registered, 11 presenters (3 from university, 7 working in clinical practice and a care giver)
- Attendees from Northland, Auckland, Counties/Manakau, Waikato, Bay of Plenty, Mid Central, Nelson/Marlborough and West Coast District Health Boards. Some attendees from private sector and non government organisations



All participants wanted continued/ongoing professional opportunities for Occupational Therapists

Future initiatives

- Work continuing on on-going initiatives to maintain links with OT practitioners in older persons mental health may include video conferencing in-service with journal club and practice reviews/case studies
- Further symposiums may be planned, frequency and location to be confirmed

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