

REVIEW ARTICLE

## EFFICACY OF THE INTERVENTION OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY.

### EFICACIA DE LA INTERVENCIÓN DE LA TERAPIA OCUPACIONAL EN ONCOLOGÍA PEDIÁTRICA.

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#### RESUMEN

El cáncer es una enfermedad terminal que se puede originar en cualquier etapa del ciclo de vida del ser humano, sin embargo, en los pacientes oncológicos pediátricos, esta población se encuentra en riesgo de perder el disfrute en la ocupación de juego debido al deterioro progresivo de sus habilidades motoras, de procesamiento e interacción social, afectando directamente sobre el desempeño ocupacional funcional del niño(a), se puede presentar una desestructuración de hábitos, roles y rutinas, afectando directamente en la participación formal en la educación de la primera infancia, por lo anteriormente mencionado, el objetivo de la revisión realizada, es realizar una búsqueda de información, relacionada con la incidencia de los signos y síntomas del cáncer en los pacientes pediátricos, analizando la prevalencia de afectación en el desempeño y participación ocupacional de los mismos, implementando una metodología de revisión documental, permitiendo conocer el abordaje con estrategias para proporcionar adaptaciones dirigidas a las actividades básicas de la vida diaria, el desempeño escolar y la actividad lúdica, teniendo en cuenta que el abordaje de Terapia Ocupacional se centra en el sustento teórico del Modelo de Ocupación Humana, el Modelo de Desempeño Ocupacional y el Marco de trabajo para la práctica de terapia ocupacional, de la Asociación Americana de Terapia Ocupacional AOTA.

#### PALABRAS CLAVES

Terapia ocupacional, Atención integral, Calidad de vida, Ocio y tiempo libre, juego, Desempeño Ocupacional.

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## SUMMARY

Cancer is a terminal disease that can originate at any stage of the human life cycle, however, in pediatric cancer patients, this population is at risk of losing enjoyment in the occupation of play due to the progressive deterioration of their motor skills, processing and social interaction, directly affecting the functional occupational performance of the child, a destructuring of habits, roles and routines can occur, directly affecting the formal participation in early childhood education, for As previously mentioned, the objective of the review carried out is to carry out a search for information related to the incidence of signs and symptoms of cancer in pediatric patients, analyzing the prevalence of affectation in their performance and occupational participation, implementing a documentary review methodology, allowing to know the approach with strategies to provide adaptations directed to the basic activities of daily life, school performance and playful activity, taking into account that the Occupational Therapy approach focuses on the theoretical support of the Model . of Human Occupation, the Occupational Performance Model, and the Framework for Occupational Therapy Practice, from the American Occupational Therapy Association AOTA.

## KEYWORDS

Occupational therapy, Comprehensive care, Quality of life, Leisure and free time, game, Occupational Performance.

## INTRODUCTION

Cancer in the pediatric field is a devastating disease that affects people of all ages, but when it comes to children, its impact is even more heartbreaking. Children with cancer face a chronic, life-threatening illness that affects their occupational performance, as well as their biopsychosocial spheres, due to emotional and physical challenges that no child should experience as a result of the traumatic event the disease can represent, both for the child and the family.

In this article, we will explore the crucial role of Occupational Therapy in the comprehensive treatment of children with cancer. We will analyze how occupational therapists design and apply

therapeutic strategies tailored to each child's individual needs, promoting their participation in meaningful activities and encouraging their autonomy.

For this reason, we will examine the physical and emotional benefits of Occupational Therapy in addressing this population, ranging from strengthening execution skills, such as motor, processing, and social interaction abilities, to maintaining quality of life. Additionally, strategies and tools used by professionals in the field of occupation to maintain functions and skills will be provided.

Throughout these pages, we will explore the conceptualization of the pathology, the signs and symptoms presented by patients depending on the location and

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stage of the disease, as well as the impact on occupational performance and participation. Therefore, occupational therapy in pediatric oncology has become an indispensable ally in the comprehensive treatment of children with cancer. Furthermore, we will reflect on the importance of disseminating knowledge and promoting access to these services.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

For the creation of the article, a review of articles with the theme "Occupational Therapy in Pediatric Oncology" is taken into account, analyzing a total of 30 articles that were previously gathered by students involved in the occupational performance practice in physical dysfunction. Subsequently, the relevant information from each article is synthesized in a research matrix, determining the central idea, authors, and objectives of the analyzed articles.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY**

Childhood cancer is a potentially life-threatening chronic illness, with a significant impact not only on the patients but also on their families. As a result, it becomes a traumatic experience for the child, due to the numerous invasive, painful procedures, and physical changes caused by the complications of the disease and the adverse effects of treatment or care of these patients.

Cancer is a devastating disease that affects millions of people worldwide, including children. Moreover, the impact

of cancer on a child's physical, emotional, and social well-being can be substantial. Therefore, there is a growing need for comprehensive care that addresses all aspects of the child's health.. (González, 2020)

Occupational therapy is one of those approaches that has proven effective in helping children with cancer manage their physical impairments, emotional needs, and social reintegration. (López, 2018)

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to explore the role of Occupational Therapy in children with cancer, focusing on three key areas: managing physical impairments and treatment limitations, addressing psychological and emotional needs, and promoting school and social reintegration. (Bustinduy, 2020)

In line with the aforementioned, it is important to highlight that pediatric oncology is the medical specialty dedicated to the diagnosis and treatment of cancer in children. While medical treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy are fundamental in the treatment of pediatric oncology patients, it can be established that the profession of Occupational Therapy (OT) plays a crucial role in the rehabilitation and recovery process, as it focuses on helping people of all ages engage in the daily activities they want and need to do. (Bernardo, 2015), In pediatric oncology, occupational therapists work with children and their families to address the physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges that arise from cancer treatment. (Peñas, 2018) These

challenges may include pain, fatigue, weakness, mood changes, and disruptions in daily routines. By providing individualized treatment plans, occupational therapists help children regain their independence and improve their quality of life. (Lima, 2022)

Expanding further on the Occupational Therapy approach in the aforementioned clinical context, occupational therapy professionals use a variety of interventions to assist pediatric cancer patients. This begins with an evaluation of functional abilities, including those related to strength, range of motion, and endurance. From there, they develop individualized treatment plans that may include therapeutic exercises, activities, and adaptations to daily routines. These interventions are designed to improve the child's physical abilities, as well as their ability to engage in meaningful activities despite the challenges posed by their condition and treatment. (Agama, 2021)

Interventions are individually designed to help children regain their motor, sensory, and perceptual skills, and reduce the impact of cancer treatment on their daily lives. Despite the benefits of Occupational Therapy in Pediatric Oncology, there are still challenges that must be addressed. (Cordova, 2020)

One of the main challenges is the limited access to occupational therapy oncology services, especially in rural areas. Additionally, there is a stigma associated with pediatric oncology, which can make it difficult for families to seek these services. Finally, there is a need for more research on the effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions for

pediatric cancer patients. (Bernardo, 2015)

The Occupational therapy plays a critical role in the treatment of pediatric cancer patients. By addressing the physical, cognitive, and emotional challenges associated with cancer treatment, occupational therapists help children regain their independence and improve their quality of life. While there are challenges that need to be addressed, the future of occupational therapy in pediatric oncology looks promising as more research is conducted and access to services improves.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology implemented is based on a documentary review of various articles related to the topic "Effectiveness of Occupational Therapy Intervention in Pediatric Oncology." It is also descriptive and qualitative in nature.

Subsequently, the contribution of Occupational Therapy focuses on improving the lives of children in oncology in several ways. This includes restructuring the patient's life to develop skills, maintain interests, and face cancer productively. Activities are implemented to enhance motor, processing, and social interaction skills, maximizing participation in meaningful activities. Additionally, the goal is to improve the patients' quality of life by exploring their interests and engaging them in age-appropriate activities that provide purpose to their daily lives. These activities range from playing with friends to developing daily living skills (such as

dressing) and participating in school and social activities.

Furthermore, indirectly, the therapy promotes coping skills to address the physical or emotional symptoms of cancer, helping children and their families learn to manage emotional symptoms through activities that foster well-being. This includes managing fear, isolation, anxiety, and sadness.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results obtained through the systematic review and analysis of articles, it can be inferred that Occupational Therapy employs various intervention strategies tailored to the subject of study to develop intervention plans for pediatric oncology patients. Generally, it is observed that the primary occupations to be prioritized are play or leisure activities, where individual and group activities must be offered to help children adapt and develop skills. It is essential to involve family members in the therapeutic process and include them in the therapeutic direction. Education about cancer and emotional support are fundamental for children and their families to understand and cope with the disease. Therapeutic work should incorporate activities aimed at improving mobility, coordination, strength, and endurance, thereby maximizing children's participation in daily life activities. However, it is highlighted that individual goals must be based on the interests and needs of the children, emphasizing the importance of an interdisciplinary approach to prevent and manage the side effects of medical

treatments. Additionally, providing opportunities for social reintegration through participation in school, work, and community activities is critical.

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