The Effects of Aquatic Therapy on Children and Adolescents with Cerebral Palsy

Purpose

Cerebral palsy (CP) is said to be one of the most common childhood-onset physical disabilities with varied impact on daily activities. Seventeen million people have cerebral palsy all around the world. About 500,000 of the 17 million are children under age of 18 that currently have cerebral palsy. “Cerebral palsy (CP) is defined as a group of permanent disorders of the development of movement and posture that cause activity limitation, and are attributed to non-progressive disturbances that occurred in the developing fetal or infant brain” (Getz, Hutzler, Vermeer, Yarom, and Unnithan, 2012). The onset of cerebral palsy is before birth or at a young age, so it is important to begin therapy and treatment as soon as possible. Aquatic therapy is defined as “the use of water and specifically designed activity by qualified personnel to aid in the restoration, extension, maintenance and quality of function for persons with acute, transient, or chronic disabilities, syndromes or diseases” (NCHPAD, 2014).

This prompts the following question: Is aquatic therapy effective or beneficial for children and adolescents with cerebral palsy?

Review of Literature

Through this research, the benefits of aquatic therapy have been discussed. Each study was conducted by either case studies or a collection of articles that included research on an aquatic therapy intervention with children with CP. The results show that aquatic therapy can be beneficial for most children and adolescents with CP. Researchers involved in the study determined that more studies need to be done to give more evidence of the effectiveness of aquatic therapy.

Knowledge Translation Plan

Through the use of aquatic therapy, children and adolescents with cerebral palsy have the ability to move and exercise without pain and impact that they would receive while doing land-based exercises. Aquatic therapy allows individuals to improve gross motor skills, mobility, functional independence, social behavior, and physical fitness and health. To fully receive benefits from aquatic therapy, regular sessions and regular attendance is required.

References


