Abstract

This workshop will introduce a new approach to effective assessment for dance movement therapy, in the form of an ‘app’ for an iPad. Participants will have a hands-on experience of the app, applying Dunphy and Mullane’s tool, Framework for Dance-Movement Assessment, to video- material from dmt sessions in a special developmental school. While the workshop will focus on clients with disabilities, the app can easily be adapted for other client groups and therapeutic outcomes.

Learning Objectives

1. This workshop will introduce participants to a new approach to effective assessment for dance therapy, in the form of an ‘app’ for an iPad, which offers therapists the opportunity to assess and record client's progress quickly and efficiently, in situ.

2. The workshop will provide workshop participants with a hands-on experience of assessing and recording clients’ responses in dmt sessions, applying Dunphy and Mullane’s tool Framework for Dance-Movement Assessment.

3. The workshop will provide participants with experience in creating data in graphical form that can facilitate comparison of change over time for individuals, between clients or groups, or of inter-rater reliability of the assessment tool being used.

Introduction

This workshop will introduce a new approach to effective assessment for dance-movement therapy, in the form of an ‘app’ for an iPad. This innovation will offer dance-movement therapists the opportunity to quickly and efficiently record assessment of client's progress, offering the potential for more thorough and effective assessment and significant time saving. As well as providing a means of recording observations instantaneously without pen or paper, it can also provide a variety of results in graph form simply and quickly. This can facilitate comparison of change over time for individuals, comparisons between clients or groups, and provide valuable data on inter-rater reliability of the assessment tool. While the workshop is framed in the context of clients with intellectual disabilities, the app can easily be adapted for other client groups and therapeutic intentions. It therefore has the potential to be useful for dmts working in a wide range of contexts.
Background

Dance-movement therapists face significant challenges in providing evidence-based assessment for their clients that is informed by appropriate dance-movement therapy theory; meets the differing requirements of host organisations; reflects fully summative assessment practices (useful for end of assessment period reporting) as well as formative assessment practices (necessary for informing clients as well as therapists about progress during the therapeutic process); and is meaningful to other stakeholders including families, other professionals, management and funding bodies (Dunphy and Scott 2003, Karkou 2010). This challenge is particularly significant for movement and dance specialists who may see large numbers of clients in groups for as little as ½ hour per week, and are expected to make thorough and meaningful assessment of those clients.

An additional challenge for dance-movement therapists is that, while theory provides specific learning content applicable to client progress, there are few appropriate, comprehensive assessment frameworks that specifically reflect the growth potential of dance-movement therapy (Cruz and Koch 2012, Powell 2008). Currently, dance-movement therapists, especially those working in disability settings, must devise their own assessment strategies which involve entering descriptive information laboriously onto spreadsheets every assessment period. As yet there have been few attempts to apply new technologies such as apps to address this problem.

However, dance-movement therapy can be informed by the growing integration of information and communications technologies (ICT) and assessment in school education. A literature review of the application of ICT in school assessment practice suggests this has been on the rise over the last decade, in part owing to the development of appropriate infrastructure including hardware, software and internet access (McFarlane 2003). Growth in ICT-facilitated assessment primarily arose for efficiency gains. Schools use ICT for improved, more timely and relevant assessment: collecting, communicating and collating student assessment data to inform curriculum design and to report on student progress. The expansion of ‘e-assessment’ (a generic term covering all uses of computers in assessment), however, is not just about being more effective with current assessment practice. It includes widening the potential range of skills, abilities, knowledge and understanding being assessed to assist teachers to access deeper understanding about ways in which individual students process information, which leads to their more personalised knowledge-making (JISC 2007; Ridgway, McCusker and Pead 2004; Ripley 2007).

These developments offer inspiration for similar use in dance-movement therapy practice. The iPad app being presented, ‘Marking the Moves’, offers the potential for effective assessment of dance-movement therapy for those working with clients with intellectual disabilities in diverse settings. It also has applicability in other setting and client groups, and has the potential to be developed for other expressive arts specialists.

This app can conveniently integrate assessment strategies for mid- and end- program reporting to therapists, management and other stakeholders and could also provide clients with ongoing feedback about their growth through dmt. The app can collate and store client data against dance-movement therapy based criteria so that it can be compared across time for individual clients, between clients in a group and between groups. The app can also facilitate recording of client movement responses with the capacity to play this data back to clients in real time, to expedite understanding of their own and their peers’ learning progress as it is occurring.
Introducing the Framework for Dance-Movement Assessment

The app is based on the Framework for Dance-Movement Assessment (Dunphy and Mullane 2011) that was developed for dance-movement therapy programs in community and educational settings. This Framework intends to assist program leaders with planning and goal setting, to support evidence-based understanding of client progress and assist with reporting to other professionals, funders and program managers on changes as a result of dance-movement therapy program participation.

The Framework is situated within a context of wholistic approach to well-being, with learning domains comprising physical, cognitive, emotional, interpersonal and expressive/aesthetic. Nine learning foci are divided within the learning domains.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING DOMAINS</th>
<th>LEARNING FOCUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>Body awareness, mastery &amp; expansion of movement range</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fitness and coordination</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ability to relax</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Initiative, decision making and leadership skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Emotional expression and regulation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Connection and communication with others</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Connection with the here and now</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expressive/Aesthetic</td>
<td>Connection between thought, imagination and body</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A sense of fun and enjoyment</td>
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It considers a range of aspects of participation in dance programs that the authors and their clients value, i.e. opportunities for and enaction of creative expression, social interaction and physical fitness. It measures individuals’ progress against Laban principles that value access to a full range of movement experiences. It places importance on a variety of measures of clients’ participation, particularly their enjoyment of the program as indicated through verbal and non-verbal feedback, and other data sources including parent/ carer feedback.

Practical exercise and discussion

Workshop participants will have a hands-on experience in use of the app. Dunphy and Mullane’s Framework for Dance-Movement Assessment will provide the tool for assessment, and video material from dmt sessions in a special developmental school will provide the client material. Participants will use the app to frame and record their observations. Ratings of workshop participants will be compared to explore the inter-rater reliability of the assessment tool.

This exercise will be complemented by a discussion of issues around assessment and evaluation for dance-movement therapists working with this client group on topics including:

- introducing dmt principles and this assessment framework to senior staff and host organization (or other organization) management;
- harmonizing dmt assessment with other assessment frameworks, especially those in schools; engaging non-specialist staff in the assessment process, and
- the benefits of “e-assessment”.

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References:


