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**The Foundation for
Knowledge In Development
(KID Foundation)**

*Serves children with Sensory
Processing Disorders (SPD) by:*

- **INCREASING** public and professional awareness of the scope and severity of the disorder.
- **PROVIDING** information and resources to families, educators, physicians, and other health care professionals.
- **SUPPORTING** advocacy for and research on SPD.



Volume 3, Issue 2

Sensations

A Newsletter for the Benefactors and Friends of the Foundation for Knowledge In Development

A Message From the Executive Director

By Lucy Jane Miller, PhD, OTR



The KID Foundation's 25th Anniversary year has been SENSATIONAL and 2005 is turning out to be a banner year for us! All the progress in research and the success of the KID

Foundation is in great part attributable to the support and advocacy of our donors and our Parent Connections groups. THANK YOU ALL SO MUCH!!! Here are the highlights of the year, as well as a look ahead to what will be accomplished soon.

- Sensory Processing Disorder is now recognized in one diagnostic taxonomy - the new Diagnostic Manual of the Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders (ICDL). Dr. Stanley I. Greenspan is Chair of ICDL. The formal diagnostic category is "Regulatory-Sensory Processing Disorder" (code #200). The manual lists are similar (but not exact) classifications to those I proposed based on my research. The new diagnostic categories full reference is: *Diagnostic Manual for Infancy and Early Childhood Mental Health, Developmental, Regulatory-Sensory Processing, Language and Learning Disorders*, and it is available at www.icdl.com. The diagnostic code numbers are posted on our website, www.KIDFoundation.org/news/news10.html. While SPD is not yet in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), inclusion in ICDL's diagnostic manual means we are on our way to having more professionals recognize SPD

as a legitimate disorder. This is a huge achievement.

- The Making Sense – Autism and Sensory Processing Seminar, held in Denver in April, was a wonderful success. This seminar marked a lot of firsts for the KID Foundation – we had never hosted a seminar of this magnitude – and to be able to pull it off successfully was so exciting. All of the speakers who so graciously offered their knowledge, all of the volunteers who kindly gave their time and talents, all of the 550 participants - and - to my KID Foundation staff for working numerous LONG days – THANK YOU so much!!!

- Plans are set for our national symposium on October 8 and 9, 2005 in Bethesda, MD, featuring keynote speakers: Dr. Michael First, editor of the DSM-IV and V; and Dr. Stanley Greenspan, who developed the DIR/floortime model. Many of the members of our SPD Scientific Workgroup will be presenting as well as OTRs who are expert clinicians. Please take a look inside this issue of *Sensations* for more information and go to www.KIDFoundation.org to register. Hope to see you there!

- My book, *Sensational Children*, has gone to press. The book contains current SPD research findings and stories of children with SPD. *Sensational Children* will provide parents and professionals with an in-depth guide to understanding SPD - focusing on the four most common subtypes. Currently, a March 2006 release is planned.

- KID Foundation is honored to have been selected by the Denver Tech Center Rotary Club as one of the beneficiaries of funds produced by the club's upcoming special event - The For Love of Children Dinner Auction. According to the Denver Tech Center Rotary, this auction was designed to generate needed funds for "outstanding charitable organizations - all determined to help improve children's lives in profound ways." As Executive Director of the KID Foundation, I want to thank Denver Tech Center Rotary for their thoughtful support of our foundation. The auction is scheduled on November 5 in the Englewood, CO area. Please e-mail susan@KIDFoundation.org if you would like more information about supporting or attending this event.

- Raena Rawlinson is the new national coordinator of the SPD-Parent Connections Hosts. As national director, Raena is assuming duties involving recruiting and interviewing new hosts. She will help SPD-Parent Connection create a mission statement and assist the KID Foundation with meeting the needs of our more than 50 Parent Hosts. Laurie Renke, our first SPD-PC National Coordinator, is now the KID Foundation's Sensory Processing Disorder Awareness Coordinator.

- The First Sensational KIDS Photo Contest is underway. Shutterbugs of all skill levels are encouraged to submit digital photos. Winners will receive fabulous prizes and all pictures entered are eligible to be featured in our newsletter, on our website and in other KID Foundation publications. More information is on page 8 of this issue of *Sensations* and you may enter the contest at www.kidfoundation.org/photocontest.

Thank you, again, for your kind support of the KID Foundation. You are the backbone of our organization.

Warm regards,

Lucy Jane Miller

Songs for Sensational Kids Vol. 1 - The Wiggly Scarecrow by Coles Whalen



As a special bonus, this CD contains a PDF file: "How to Use These Songs to Move, Think, Relate and Rest," by Lucy Jane Miller, OTR

"Kids will wiggle jiggle and giggle with delight. While they have fun moving to the music, their sensory processing will surely improve by leaps and bounds!"

Carol Stock Kranowitz, M.A.
Author of *The Out-of-Sync Child*

Features 15 whimsical songs for young and old alike!!!

Listen to song samples and order "The Wiggly Scarecrow" at www.KIDFoundation.org/boutique

For a \$15 donation to the KID Foundation - you will receive the CD!



Sensational KIDS bracelets are available. Proceeds benefit the scientific research advancements being performed at the STAR Center, Denver. To place an order, please visit KID Foundation's boutique at www.KIDFoundation.org/boutique.

Indoor Obstacle Courses for Parents and Teachers

By Carol Stock Kranowitz, M.A.

Fish gotta swim, birds gotta fly. Kids gotta climb, jump and balance. While dangling from banisters, scooting under turnstiles, teetering on curbs and jumping into puddles may dismay grown-ups, children persist with good reason.

How do kids learn to think and relate to the world around them? By scanning their surroundings; touching wooden, metal, rubber, or concrete surfaces; grasping and releasing handholds; changing body positions; maintaining equilibrium; and experimenting with different movement patterns. Furthermore, they are having fun, and “fun,” Dr. Ayres wrote, “is the child’s word for sensory integration.”

An obstacle course is sensational, both to provide fun and to promote praxis. Praxis, a sensory-based process, involves: Ideation (having an idea of something you want to do); Motor planning (figuring out how to do it); and Execution (carrying out the plan). Just as the person who chops his own wood is warmed twice, the person who builds and moves through his own obstacle course strengthens praxis many times over.

You and your child can build an obstacle course outdoors, where everything is better, or indoors in bad weather. You don’t need special equipment – just a fresh way of looking at ordinary objects, with an eye on how they can promote sensory processing.

What to Do:

1) Brainstorm, or ideate, with your kids to make three lists with these headings: *Ways to Move*, *Prepositions*, and *Objects*. Encourage children to tell or show you what they have in mind. (For inspiration, see box.)

2) Together, plan the course by mixing and matching list ingredients, e.g.:

Step / Into / Shoe boxes	Scoot / Around / Wastebaskets
Creep / Under / Table	Crawl / Through / Tunnel
Walk / Between / Lines of tape	Somersault / Across / Mattress
Roll / Over / Bearskin rug	Jump / On / Bubble wrap

Vary movements, prepositions and objects to reinforce children’s ability to handle and discriminate different materials (tactile sense), stretch muscles and develop body awareness (tactile/proprioceptive senses), balance and move through space (vestibular sense), perceive spatial relationships and negotiate around obstacles (visual-motor skills), and improve motor planning, coordination and postural responses (sensory-based motor skills).

3) Execute the plan by laying out the course. In tight spaces, such as a hallway, a linear course is okay for one or two kids. In the yard or cleared room a circular course is best for a crowd.

Let youngsters help! Kids with SPD often sense what their systems need; honor their ideas and be flexible about altering the plan. Also, remember that the heavy work of lifting, carrying, pushing and pulling materials into place is like “over-the-counter” occupational therapy.

(continued on next page)

Tips:

- Have everyone travel in the same direction to avoid traffic jams.
- Prior to a happy birthday party, practice building and going through a course with your child so she feels in the-know, adept, and ready to help her friends if they get stuck.
- For holidays, spice up the course with seasonal accents.
 - ❖ Valentine's Day: use red Bottle Babies (soda bottles half-filled with tinted water) to circumnavigate; make a curvy path with red masking tape; stick down red paper hearts to jump on and red arrows to manage the flow.
 - ❖ President's Day: play patriotic music; emphasize red, white and blue objects (sheets, cushions, tape, hoops).
 - ❖ St. Patrick's Day: tape tiny paper feet along the course so kids can follow the leprechaun's path; at the start, hand each child a large "gold" piece to toss into a pot at the end.
- Have the kids go barefoot, or backwards, or with music.
- Incorporate your child's favorite theme. Does he love trains? Pretend that obstacles are the locomotive, freight car, caboose.... Are planets her thing? Obstacles can be Mercury, Venus, Earth.... State capitals? Hartford, Annapolis, Denver.... This thematic technique may jump-start the child who is not a self-starter.
- Be vigilant about safety. Allow sufficient space between obstacles for the child to readjust his posture before moving to the next. Always be there.

To give children the chance to master new physical challenges, learn problem-solving skills and develop praxis, make an obstacle course every day! Build it, and they will come.

Carol Kranowitz writes and lectures about SPD. For more information on obstacle courses and heavy work activities, see *The Out-of-Sync Child Has Fun* (Perigee 2003) and *The Goodenoughs Get in Sync* (Sensory Resources, 2004).

Ways to Move: Step, walk, creep (on belly), crawl (on all fours), scoot (on bottom), roll, somersault, jump (two feet), hop (one foot), leap, run

Prepositions: Up, upon, down, into, onto, between, beneath, beside, under, over, through, across, around

Objects:

Consumables – Construction paper shapes, shoeboxes, paper plates, bubblewrap, masking tape, Bottle Babies (2-liter soda bottles, half-filled with colored water)

Kitchen: Stools, chairs, mixing bowls

Garage: Sawhorses, boards, inner tubes, tires, thick rope, flower pots, tarpaulins

Household: Wastebaskets, couch cushions, mattress, bridge table, exercise bench, telephone books, wash tubs, rugs, carpet squares, and sheet to drape over chairs for a tent

Kids' equipment: Plastic hoops, big blocks, gym mats, Crash Pad (duvet cover, stuffed with pillows and foam)

OTs Ask KID foundation

Q: I would appreciate help in making an informed decision regarding the existence of Sensory Processing Disorder.

A: This is a very complex issue that I have been studying at the medical school in Colorado. In fact, I've been doing research for 30 years – full-time for 10 years. We have evidence that children with Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD) have atypical sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems (see 1 and 2 below). We have pilot prevalence figures of 5% of general population (see 3 below). We have pilot treatment effectiveness data related to effectiveness of Occupational Therapy with a sensory-based approach (submitted 9/2005 to be published 2006). None of this makes SPD a diagnosis but it is all evidence building toward a diagnosis.

We have an advocacy program underway to get SPD accepted into the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual when it is revised and published. And the new diagnostic manual (see 4 below) from the Interdisciplinary Council on Development and Learning does include SPD as a diagnosis calling it Regulatory-Sensory Processing Disorder with several subtypes. The diagnostic codes are listed on our website:

www.KIDFoundation.org/news/news10.html. Related references are below. Hope this helps.

Lucy Jane Miller

- 1 McIntosh, D. N., Miller, L.J., Shyu, V., & Hagerman, R. (1999). Sensory-modulation disruption, electrodermal responses, and functional behaviors. *Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology*, 41, 608-615.
2. Schaaf, R.C., Miller, L.J., Sewell, D., & O'Keefe, S. (2003). Children with disturbances in sensory processing: A pilot study examining the role of the parasympathetic nervous system. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 57(4), 442-449.
3. Ahn, R., Miller, L.J., Milberger, S., & McIntosh, D.N. (2004). Prevalence of parents' perceptions of sensory processing disorders among kindergarten children. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 58(3), 287-302.
4. Greenspan, S.I. & Wieder, S. (Eds.). *Diagnostic manual for infancy and early childhood: Mental health, developmental, regulatory-sensory processing and language disorders and learning challenges (ICDL-DMIC)* (pp. 73-112). Bethesda, MD: Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders (ICDL).

2005 Events & Conferences

[October 6 & 7, 2005](#)

Sensory Processing Disorder Scientific Work Group convenes in Bethesda, MD.

[October 8 & 9, 2005](#)

Sensory Processing Disorder: New Scientific Findings & Successful Strategies for Intervention featuring Dr. Michael First, Dr. Stanley Greenspan and the Sensory Processing Disorder Scientific Work Group. Both parents and professionals encouraged to attend.

[October 31, 2005](#)

National Sensory Awareness Day. *S.I. Focus Magazine* is spearheading this great initiative for the sensory community. Parents, OTs, SLPs, Educators, Sensory Industry Professionals and other professionals in industries that work with children, please join together with *S.I. Focus Magazine* in actively raising awareness on a national level. Visit www.sifocus.com or www.sensoryinformation.com for details, to volunteer and/or to sponsor this worthy cause.

Help KID Foundation:

Do your online shopping on our website, which hosts more than 90 shops including Amazon, eBay, Best Buy, Gap and Sensory Resources. Five percent of what you spend supports us at no cost to you!

www.KIDFoundation.org/shop





KID Foundation Presents:

Sensory Processing Disorder:

New Scientific Findings & Successful Strategies for Intervention

Marriott Bethesda – 5151 Pooks Hill Rd. (between Wisconsin Avenue and Rockville Pike), Bethesda, MD

October 8 – 9, 2005

Seminar Schedule:

SATURDAY, October 8, 2005

7:30 - 8:15 a.m. Seminar Registration, Breakfast and Exhibits

8:15 - 8:45 Introduction – Lucy Jane Miller, PhD, OTR and Margaret Bauman, MD

8:45 – 10:15 **Keynote Speakers:**

Michael First, MD

Editor of the DSM-IV and Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University. Dr. First will discuss the topic *Sensory Processing Disorder: Possible Pathways to the DSM – V*

and

Stanley Greenspan, MD

Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Georgetown University Medical School. He will present: *Inclusion of Regulatory-Sensory Processing Disorder in the Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders Diagnostic Manual*

Attendees may choose one course for each session below:

10:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. SESSION ONE

How the Brain Synthesizes Information from Different Senses to Produce Adaptive Behavior Barry Stein, PhD
Discussant: Barbara Brett-Green, PhD

or

Reliability and Validity of the Sensory Processing Disorder Scales Sarah Schoen, PhD, OTR and Lucy Jane Miller, PhD, OTR

12:45 p.m. - 1:45 p.m. SESSION TWO

Sensory Modulation and its Impairment: Neural Mechanisms And Potential Therapeutic Approaches Using Pre-pulse Inhibition Paradigms Ed Levin, PhD
Discussant: Margaret Bauman, MD

or

Addressing Sensory Processing Disorder in the Public Schools: Sharon Ray, ScD, OTR, June Bunch, MHA, OTR and Jan Hollenbeck, MS, OTR

1:55 - 2:55 p.m. SESSION THREE

A Genetic Epidemiology Approach to Sensory Defensiveness Hill Goldsmith, PhD; Discussant: David Pauls, PhD

or

Vestibular/Visual/Auditory Intensives: Intervention Across the Age Span Jane Koomar, PhD, OTR

3:20 p.m. - 4:20 p.m. SESSION FOUR

Neurophysiological and Behavioral Characterization of Adults With Sensory Processing Impairments Michael Kisley, PhD
Discussant: Edward Goldson, MD

or

Classroom Strategies for Students With Sensory Processing Disorder Barbara Hanft, MA, OTR

4:30 - 5 p.m. PLENARY SESSION

Special presentation by Jeff Stimpson, author of: *Alex the Fathering of a Premie*

Sensationally Yours Benefit Reception - Featuring Walt Willey's comedy show 6:30 p.m. October 8

"Walt joined the cast of ABC's *All My Children* in 1987, originating the role of lawyer, Jackson Montgomery. Walt branched out into stand-up comedy in 1989 and headlines across the country." - ABC Online

Space is limited for both the symposium and the reception.

For quick & convenient registration, please visit: www.KIDFoundation.org/symposium

A special Marriott Bethesda hotel room rate is available for 2005 KID Foundation Scientific Symposium attendees. Register early before the limited number of special-rate rooms are booked. To reserve your hotel room, visit: www.stayatmarriott.com/2005KIDFoundation



SUNDAY, October 9, 2005

7 a.m. – 8 a.m. – Continental Breakfast and Exhibits

8 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. – **The Seven Steps of Successful Advocacy**
Mary Woolley, MA, Executive Director of Research America

8:50 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. SESSION ONE

Sensory Processing and Brain Metabolism in Sensory Hyper-responsive Adults Sinclair Smith ScD *or* **Sensory Processing and Self-Regulation in Infants and Young Children** Marie Anzalone, ScD, OTR
Discussant: Moya Kinnealey, PhD, OTR

9:50 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. SESSION TWO

Validating Sensory Processing Disorder by Examining Brain Physiology: Recent EEG Data Patti Davies, PhD, OTR and William Gavin, PhD *or* **Regulatory-Sensory Processing Disorder and the Sensory-Affective Connection Using the DIR Model** Beth Osten, MS, OTR

11:10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. SESSION THREE

Neurobiological Correlates of SPD In a Primate Model: Habituation, Sensitization and Dopamine Function *or* **Applying Sensory Principles With Children Who Have Autistic Spectrum Disorders** Roseann Schaaf, PhD, OTR
Mary Schneider, PhD, OTR

12:05 - 12:30 p.m. CLOSING SESSION

Advocacy to Obtain Recognition of Sensory Processing Disorder: Next Steps Lucy Jane Miller, PhD, OTR

To register, go to www.KIDFoundation.org/symposium or fill out the registration form and billing information below and mail it to KID Foundation, 1901 W. Littleton Blvd., Littleton, CO 80120

Registration Form

YES! Sign me up for the Scientific Symposium to be held October 8 - 9, 2005 in Bethesda, MD. I have selected ONE choice for each session below. My session choices are as follows:

SATURDAY, October 8:

Introduction: 8:15 a.m. - 8:45 a.m.
 Keynote Speakers: 8:45 - 10:15 a.m.

Session One: 10:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.
 Stein *or* Schoen & Miller

Session Two: 12:45 p.m. - 1:45 p.m.
 Levin *or* Ray, Bunch & Hollenbeck

Session Three: 1:55 p.m. - 2:55 p.m.
 Goldsmith *or* Koomar

Session Four: 3:20 p.m. - 4:20 p.m.
 Kisley *or* Hanft

Alex: The Fathering of a Premie: 4:30-5 p.m.

Saturday October 8 - Benefit (optional):

YES! I will be attending the Benefit Reception, featuring special guest Walt Willey.
I would like _____ reception ticket(s) (\$40 per ticket);
totaling: \$ _____

SUNDAY, October 9:

Plenary Session – Research America 8 - 8:45 a.m.

Session One: 8:50 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.
 Smith *or* Anzalone

Session Two: 9:50 p.m. – 10:40 p.m.
 Davies & Gavin *or* Osten

Session Three: 11:10 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
 Schneider *or* Schaaf

Closing: Advocacy for SPD: 12:05 p.m. - 12:30 p.m.

For online registration, go to www.KIDFoundation.org/symposium or mail this completed form along with your session selections to: KID Foundation, 1901 W. Littleton Blvd., Littleton, CO 80120

Name _____ Email _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Please circle one:	Registration	Plus Benefit Reception (Optional)	Total \$
Parent	\$350	\$40	
Professional	\$400	\$40	

Please enclose payment with this registration form. Make checks payable to KID Foundation, or enter your credit card information below. Visa, Master Card and AMEX accepted online, mail or fax. Registration deadline is September 15, 2005. Full refunds for cancellations will be given until September 9, 2005, minus a \$25 administration fee. Registration is transferable.

Card Type (circle one): **VISA MC AMEX** Name as it appears on credit card _____

Card# _____ Expiration Date _____ Signature _____

Preferred method of contact (circle one): mail e-mail phone no preference

SENSATIONAL KIDS PHOTO CONTEST



PRIZES!!!

First Place Winner Receives a Leap Frog Leap Pad Learning System (for ages 4-8) courtesy of Wells Fargo Bank!!!!

Second Prize is a \$50 gift card from Mike's Camera!!!

Third Place receives a Dream Kuddle Pillow donated by Pippen Hill Design!!

Honorable Mention: All qualified entrants receive a Sensational KIDS child-size bracelet!

Enter the SENSATIONAL KIDS Photo Contest. Please support us by sharing your cute, candid and precious photos. Entries are eligible to be displayed on our website, newsletter and fliers.

The KID Foundation focuses on parent support, research, education and advocacy related to Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), a complex disorder of the brain. People with SPD misinterpret everyday sensory information, such as touch, sound and movement. This can lead to behavioral problems, difficulties with coordination and many other issues.

SENSATIONAL KIDS Photo Contest Categories for 2005

"Show that SENSATIONAL Smile" - close-up shots/portraits of children

"Seasons" - images that depict children in snow, sun, wind and/or rain

TO ENTER AND FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT WWW.KIDFOUNDATION.ORG/PHOTOCONTEST

Rules: Color and black and white photos eligible to win the contest are of children from the age of birth to 18, at the time the picture was taken. Winners will be picked based on the quality of the photo, its composition, style and the photographer's creativity. Keep in mind that this is a photo contest - not a beauty contest - so the winning photographers will be selected based on the essential elements of the photograph - not on their child or children's looks. Photos must not contain any objectionable material. Photos will be judged fairly by a panel of three volunteer judges. Decisions are final.

All entries must be emailed in a jpeg or gif format to susan@kidfoundation.org no later than midnight Mountain Time on December 2, 2005. You may submit as many photos as you want of the same child.

By entering the contest, parents or legal guardians of children in submitted photos grant the KID Foundation permission to publish their photos and the child's first name on the web site and any additional publications and marketing materials of the KID Foundation and SPD Network. Copyrighted photos may not be submitted. The individual submitting the photo must be at least 18 years of age and have legal ownership of the photo and sign our photo release form to allow us to use the photos indefinitely. The child's last name, address and phone number will not be published, nor will the KID Foundation share your child's information, other than first name and age, with anyone. Photos will gain international exposure on our websites. Entered photos become the property of the KID Foundation. All photos submitted for the contest photos may be featured on the KID Foundation website, its companion site SPD Network, and in our marketing materials before, during and after the photos have been judged and a contest winner is announced. The KID Foundation is not responsible for technology, Internet or e-mail failures which result in the loss of photo files, correspondence, delivery, etc.

Photo contest winners will be notified by email within 18 days after the contest deadline. Employees of the KID Foundation and their families are not eligible to participate.

Entries received after the contest deadline are not eligible for prizes but may be featured on our website and in our marketing materials.

Reimbursement Strategies:

The Minnesota Experience

By Cathy Brennan, MA, OTR/L, FAOTA

Reimbursement Chair for the Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association.

Occupational therapists have not been immune to the effects managed care have had on our practice. Reimbursement issues, especially involving payment for outpatient occupational therapy services with a sensory integrative focus, have received much attention in the last few years in Minnesota. The Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association has been involved with peer review of occupational therapy documentation since 1987. Third party payers contract with the Association to review outpatient cases for medical necessity, frequency, and duration of services. Over the years, relationships with the payers have resulted in better payment for occupational therapy services. Sensory integration focused occupational therapy, however, has remained a challenge as more payers look to evidence-based treatment to decide on coverage criteria.

Insurance companies have medical policy boards that make coverage decisions. Most boards seem to be looking for Level 1 ranked research to justify efficacy of treatment. Level 1 research is evidence gathered from a systematic review of well-designed randomized controlled studies, of which, we have few. Many insurers have put a tag called “investigational” on occupational therapy utilizing a sensory integrative focus for this reason. Margo B. Holm stated in her 2000 Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture, “Although the evidence for *what* we do and *how* we do it may be difficult to find, we have an obligation to become competent in, and make a habit of, searching for the evidence, appraising its value, and presenting it to those we serve in an understandable manner.” (Holm, M.B. (2000). Our mandate for the new millennium: evidence based practice. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 54, 575-585.) As therapists, we must take this mandate very seriously and support research in any way we can.

The Reimbursement Committee of the Minnesota Occupational Therapy Association has been successful in securing reimbursement for occupational therapy with a sensory integrative focus from several of the large HMO’s in the state through differing strategies. These strategies are shared in the hope that other states may also be successful in utilizing them.

Identify one contact person within your state occupational therapy association to deal with reimbursement issues.

We found that insurers become very frustrated when many therapists are calling to express similar concerns regarding coverage. A more coordinated effort can be launched when a single contact, who knows the issue and can maintain an objective focus, is dealing with the insurer. Minnesota has developed a Reimbursement Monitor Form that therapists complete providing details of their specific reimbursement concern. These concerns are tracked, trends in reimbursement problems are identified, and a plan is developed by the Reimbursement Committee to pursue action.

Identify a group of “experts.”

Organize a group of therapists skilled in sensory integrative focused occupational therapy treatment principles who can be tapped for specific resource information when an insurer makes a request for efficacy studies or information on specific populations. Identify therapists who can speak thoughtfully and objectively about the issues and are willing to meet with insurers. Identify families who have had successful outcomes and can speak to the functional changes they have witnessed with their children. Identify physicians who refer to your clinic and would be willing to speak to the insurer’s medical director about changes they have seen with patients referred to occupational therapy using a sensory integrative focus.

(continued on next page)

Prepare an information packet that is easily photocopied and distributed.

Efficacy studies are the main item being requested by insurers. The studies are very difficult to assemble in limited time. Ask your OT school if there is a student looking for a special project who could assist you. Look for studies that address improved functional outcomes with better sensory processing.

Talk about sensory integration within the context of occupational therapy.

Ask physicians to refer for occupational therapy utilizing a sensory integrative frame of reference. Many insurers will cover occupational therapy but perceive sensory integration therapy as experimental and unfounded in research.

Identify outcome goals related to occupational performance.

Therapists need to identify occupational performance that will be impacted by the use of sensory integrative treatment principles. Goals must identify outcomes that are measurable, time limited, and functional. Many therapists are addressing components of function but not tying the component to occupational performance. Insurers need to clearly see what the effect of treatment will be in very practical terms.

Ask for “episodes of care” in reasonable blocks of time.

It is our experience that most insurers will only approve 3-6 months of treatment at a time. They react strongly when a request is made to prior authorize two years of outpatient service following an initial evaluation. Requesting additional visits after some progress has been shown is more realistic and more likely to be approved. Identify a specific target performance outcome to be met in this episode of care, not all possible outcomes for the child’s lifetime.

Reduce frequency of treatment periodically to evaluate if the child can continue to make progress.

Therapists need to periodically reduce the frequency of treatment, especially with long-term cases, to assess if the child can continue to make progress with reduced visits. Direct therapy cannot be lifelong. The family and community need to be empowered to support therapy efforts through home programs and use the consultation of a therapist in between episodes of direct care.

Know the specific requirements of your payers.

Each payer has specific criteria that are used to screen cases for payment. Know what diagnostic and treatment codes to use. Make a case for medical necessity, as this is a requirement of most payers. Identify why the skills of a therapist are required. Develop relationships with the payer personnel you speak with about prior authorization. Utilize this relationship to teach them about sensory integration. Ask to present an in-service to their medical director and utilization review staff.

Be an advocate for case-by-case review.

Many HMO’s utilize case managers to review claims. Be an advocate for this individual review of long-term cases involving sensory integration. Efficacy of sensory integrative occupational therapy treatment can then be monitored per child and payment made based on the outcomes, which are cost effective.

Appeal denials of coverage.

Insurers have appeal mechanisms that should be utilized when coverage is denied. Families usually need to initiate the process. Therapists can assist by assuring their documentation is in order and including a letter to the payer with any additional information to support payment.

Reimbursement issues will continue to have a significant effect on the practice of occupational therapy focusing on sensory integration. Due to the long-term nature of the treatment, insurance will closely scrutinize services. It is essential that families and therapists work together to address outcomes that are related to occupational performance. Relationships with payers need to be established and ongoing education should be provided to assure that continued coverage will occur. Finally, published research must show convincing evidence that occupational therapy with a sensory integrative focus is effective.

Our Generous Donors

Thank you for your support!

Foundations

Spiral Foundation
Tuchman Family Foundation
Wallace Research Foundation

Corporations and Non-Profit Organizations

CAR Program	Roberts
Daniel K. Roberts	Sensory Resources
IBM	Southpaw Enterprises Inc
Jefferies & Company Inc	Sutton Therapy
OT Dept of Washington South School	The Spiral Foundation
OT Kids Inc.	Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.

Individuals

Gordon Armstrong	Cheryl Loesh
Balystein	Marie-Christine and David
Pamela J. Barrow	Kristin Mawhinney
Leigh Burkey	Michael McClintock
Jerald & Christine Cayo	Pam McFall
Murray Cohen	Shannon Media
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