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Clinical practicums in kindergarten from low socioeconomic neighborhoods: An exploratory study

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Introduction: In Quebec (Canada), about 25% of students in kindergarten (5 years old) presented a delay in one or more areas of development, with those from low socioeconomic families more at risk. Since occupational therapy is rarely available in kindergarten, it is relevant to explore ways to offer these services.

Objective: This study aims to document the interventions of occupational therapy trainees in kindergarten classes.

Methods: A multiple-case studies design was used. Each case included a kindergarten teacher and his/her group/class. The recruitment was done in three schools from low socioeconomic neighborhoods in Quebec. Six occupational therapy trainees, almost graduates, worked with the kindergarten teachers and their students during 7 weeks, under the supervision of two Occupational Therapists. The effects of their interventions on the group/classes were measured with the Goal Attainment Scale (GAS), the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM), and the Performance Quality Rating Scale (PQRS). Intra- and inter-cases analyses are ongoing.

Results: Eight kindergarten classes, including 9 teachers and 135 students, received services from the trainees. Four or five goals were elaborated with teachers for each group/class. The goals concerned mainly self-regulation, posture, pencil grasp and cutting. According to the GAS, 78,0% of the goals have been reached. The COPM and the PQRS showed significant clinical changes in 47,2% and 58,3% of the goals respectively.

Conclusion: Occupational therapy may support kindergarten teachers by collaborating with them to improve the development and participation of their students. Future studies should describe teachers' perceptions regarding occupational therapy in kindergarten.