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Seniors and risk: Conceptualizations in Canadian occupational and physical therapy practice magazines

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Abstract

Introduction: The prevention or remediation of risk - its assessment and its management - has increasingly become a focus of seniors' rehabilitation (Ballinger & Payne, 2000, 2002; Bornat & Bytheway, 2010; Kaufman, 1999). However, little is known about what is meant when the term risk is used by occupational and physical therapists.

Objective: The goal of this project was to analyze more closely the concept of risk as discussed by Canadian occupational and physical therapists.

Methodology: This project was one part of a larger scoping review. All issues of Physiotherapy Practice (2011-2013) and Occupational Therapy Now (1999-2013) were examined. Articles were included if they mentioned the world risk and were about rehabilitation with seniors. The main risk-related message of each article was extracted. Then, this message was examined to determine the primary location of the source of risk - this is, within the person, the environment or the activity.

Significance: Understanding of how occupational therapists and physical therapists are talking about seniors and risk may make us better aware of which risks are emphasized in rehabilitation. This may help more critically analyze these discussions.

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Introduction

Previous work examining the implications of an increasing focus on risk in public health and home care has raised awareness of tensions and contradictions that arise between health care practices and the everyday realities and needs of seniors (Ceci & Purkis, 2009; Millington, 2012; Minkler et al., 2000; Petersen & Lupton, 1996). There is an urgent need to critically examine how rehabilitation providers conceptualize risk in the lives of seniors and how these conceptualizations shape practice.

Methodology

In addition to publishing peer-reviewed journals, the Canadian Physiotherapy Association and the Canadian Occupational Therapy Association publish practice magazines. Their two practice magazines, Physiotherapy Practice and Occupational Therapy Now, focus on current practice trends. For this study, all issues of Physiotherapy Practice (2011-2013) and Occupational Therapy Now (1999-2013) were examined. Articles were studied for the inclusion of the word risk in the context of rehabilitation with seniors. The identified articles were grouped according to practice areas.

Source of risk

Person	Environment	Activity
Studying falls in long-term care facilities by seniors with dementia. (2004)	Discharge planning for older adults. Analyzing risks at home. (2007)	Risks during meal preparation by older adults. (2007)
Falls and older adults: risk resides in the person, can be mitigated by environmental changes. (2007)		Assessment of an older driver's potential to harm self or others when driving. (2007)
Adults diagnosed with schizophrenia have risks located in the person (risk of falls, anxiety, depression, difficulty following with routine of facility) and also risk of inadequate care due to geography. (2009)		Perspectives on driving evaluation and retirement. Evaluating crash risk - risk to public safety. (2010)
Issue of people with dementia driving, risk to public safety. (2010)	Risk and safety of seniors at home. (2010)	Assessment of crash risk of elderly drivers and public safety by Candrive. (2010)
Added risks of persons with osteoporosis (2011)	Multidisciplinary work with at-risk seniors. (2011)	Assessment of risks associated with Nordic pole walking. (2011)
Risk of inability to communicated properly with seniors. (2011)	Risk of not introducing physiotherapists early enough in the ICU (2012)	Risks of improper technique when running. (2012)
Assessing risks of seniors with low vision. (2011)		Analyzing the risks of exercising in cold temperatures. (2012)
Risk of injury for caregivers. (2013)		Risks associated with improper running technique. (2012)
		Exercising in extreme temperatures. (2013)
		Improper technique when swimming. (2013)
		Consequences of improper technique when swimming. (2013)

Physiotherapy Practice articles

Occupational Therapy Now articles

Results

The Occupational Therapy Now articles related primarily to physical risk in everyday activities in the home, falls prevention, and driving evaluation. There was some mention of risks related to difficulties with access to care, physical risks to caregivers of persons needing physical assistance due to spinal cord injury and potential risks from recycled adaptive equipment that had not been properly maintained. The Physiotherapy Practice articles related to minimizing risk in sport activities through emphasizing proper technique and exercise as an intervention to prevent functional decline. Risks related to care, such as poor communication and on the part of the therapist or reluctance to consider mobilization for patients in the ICU were also mentioned.

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Discussion

The Physiotherapy Practice magazines focus on potential risks in specific activities. As evident in the table above, the majority of articles emphasize risk associated with various sports. There are a few articles concerning risk inherent in the environment and person. The Occupational Therapy Now articles evenly discuss risk in the person, the environment and activities. There is a slight increased amount of articles on risk in the person. Risk has been more often discussed in recent years with the majority of the articles within the past four years. This might be reflective of the fact that Physiotherapy Practice only started publication in 2011, however Occupational Therapy Now began publishing in 1999.

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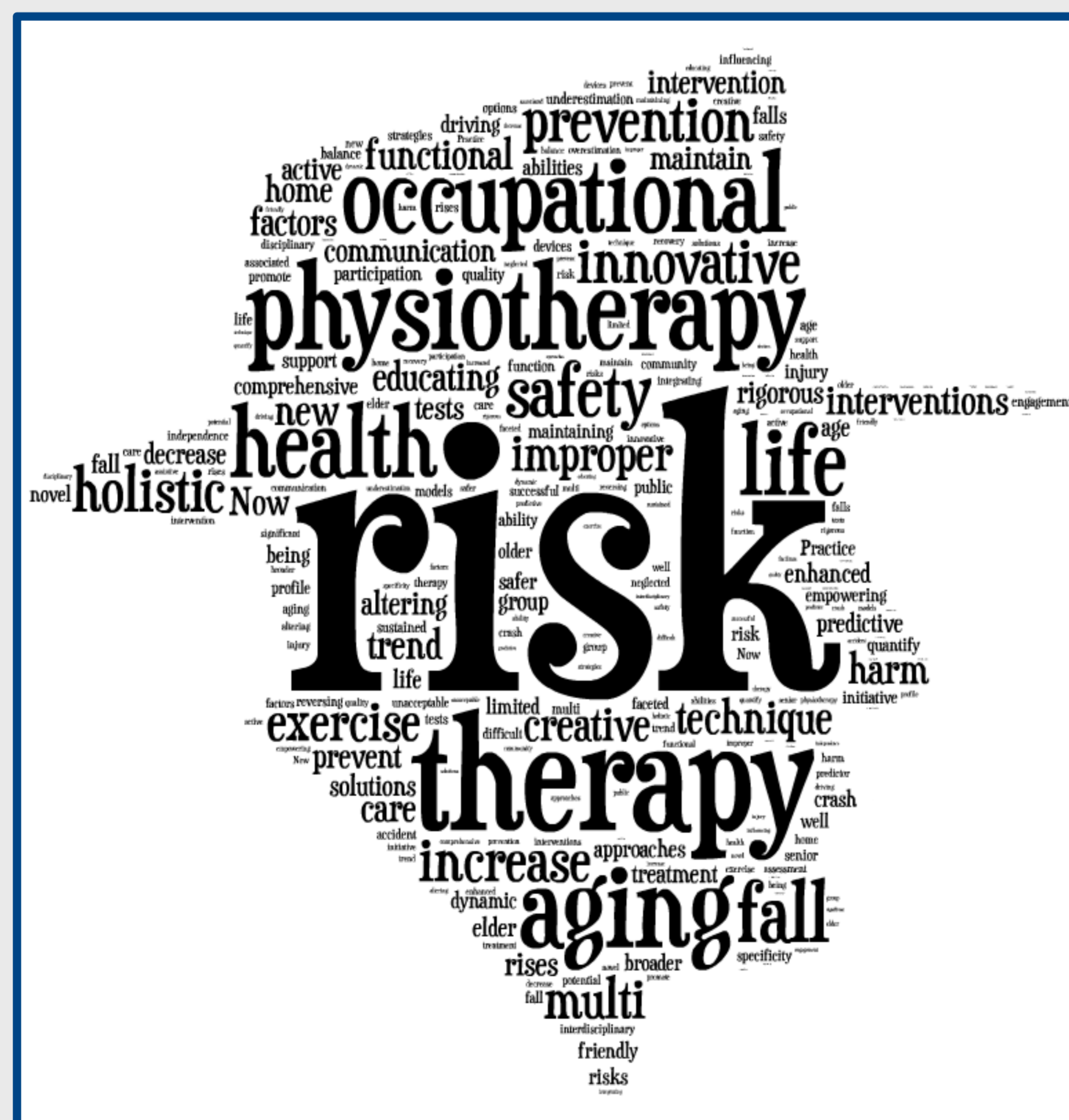
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A word cloud of the common words found in articles concerning risk and rehabilitation with seniors in Physiotherapy Practice and Occupational Therapy Now magazines.