Cris Rowan co-supervised Chantelle Bernier's doctoral dissertation in the area of impact of technology on children

Read more about Chantelle's work below:

My research in the area of technology use and child development began after I started to observe it take priority over healthy activities for not only my family, but for those around me within the community and in other environments. What was so concerning, is I observed children attaching more to technology then engaging in activities that Cris believes are critical for healthy development, including those that are filled movement, touch, connection to other humans and nature. As an occupational therapy doctoral student, I conducted a literature review surrounding this topic and found an immense amount of research emerging that associated child technology overuse with harm, specifically it was being connected to delays in physical, social, mental and academic areas of child development. While reviewing research, I came across Cris’s work in the references of multiple articles and decided to contact her after becoming aware that she was the true expert in the field. Three weeks later, we began working together. For the first part of my residency, I traveled to Canada and received level I instructor training and gained exposure in this area. Then I traveled back to the states and together we partnered with a pediatric clinic in southern California where I previously completed fieldwork. During my work there, I detected a lack of awareness regarding the impact of technology overuse by children throughout the professional community, and a need for education surrounding this topic.

The second part of my doctoral residency consisted of completing a program awareness assessment of technology use in children, which included collaborations, direct and indirect observations, data collection and reviewing survey results. Results from the program assessment found that therapists (occupational, physical and speech), pediatric clients, and families all lacked knowledge on technology overuse in children. Moreover, the therapists did not have any strategies to manage balance between technology use and critical factors for healthy development. Based on this information, a 4.5 hour educational workshop was developed and implemented by Cris and I for the staff and therapists at the pediatric clinic. As a result of the workshop, modifications were implemented within this clinical setting. Results from the Technology Post-Educational Survey, indicated all attendees of the workshop intend to educate families and colleagues regarding technology overuse, and reducing the overall use of technology within the therapeutic environment. Protocol used included assessing and screening pediatric clients for technology overuse, distribution of educational handouts and expert technology guidelines, and reducing the amount of therapeutic technology clinician’s use within their treatment sessions. Pediatric clinic administration also consulted with me...
relating to recommendations presented at the workshop. The following changes were immediately approved and implemented:

- **No Tech Policy:** technology free zones were designated within the therapeutic environment for caregivers and clients only, including all treatment rooms and main waiting room. Note: therapists are still utilizing therapeutic technology within treatment sessions.
- **Caregiver/Parent Education:** printed educational material addressing the effects of technology and radiation on child development was placed in caregiver education section in the clinic. Administration requested that Cris and I implement a full day parent education workshop to include breakout sessions focusing on managing technology in the home environment, and choosing healthy activities to participate in with their children as a substitute for technology use.
- **Staff Education:** administration requested that I provide a condensed one hour version of the educational workshop for Early Intervention therapists and staff.

Future plans: As an emerging expert in the field of technology overuse and child development, I plan on continuing to promote awareness through education and application of the knowledge I gained from Cris and throughout this experiential. I also plan on routinely screening children for technology overuse within my practice. Cris and I have submitted for publication to a professional journal and are beginning our next journey of developing a module for an advanced pediatric course that we will teach to occupational therapy doctoral students at Pacific University this November. I feel so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with Cris and I am excited to continue to work with her now and in the future.

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