Translating assessment findings into practice: A Canadian Occupational Therapist's journey

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Introduction

Children with hemiplegic Cerebral Palsy experience difficulty when performing bimanual tasks. Many of these children are referred to an occupational therapist (OT) to increase function in identified occupational performance issues (OPs) due to their hemiplegia’s impact on bimanual ability. The Assisting Hand Assessment (AHA)1,2 and the Mini-Assisting Hand Assessment (Mini-AHA)3 offer a unique approach to evaluating the use of the assisting hand (AH) in functional bimanual tasks4. Assessment results enable OTs to describe how children with hemiplegia use their assisting hand in bimanual tasks and facilitate targeted intervention planning based on the child’s individual profile.

The Kids-Assisting Hand Assessment (Kids-AHA)

The Kids-AHA is an evaluative, criterion-referenced assessment used to describe and measure how effectively children with a unilateral disability use their assisting hand in bimanual tasks. As a reliable and validated measure of performance5, the AHA is an outcome measurement of choice when evaluating actual performance following occupational therapy interventions designed to increase functional use (i.e., Constraint-Induced Movement Therapy (CIMT), Bimanual Therapy (BT)).

An AHA score obtained at 18 months of age can predict the trajectory of bimanual hand skill development by the early school-age years.6

**Population:** Hemiplegic Cerebral Palsy
Brachial Plexus Palsy

**International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF):** Performance-based assessment, focusing on the activity domain.1,3

**Paradigm:** Rasch Measurement Model to generate interval scale data. Items are ranked by difficulty. Scoring generates an individualized hierarchy of what skills have been mastered and what skills may be most appropriate to target next.

**Administration & scoring:** Certification process and purchase of assessment kit required. Video recorded semi-structured play session (approx. 15 min). Additional time required to score video recording.

The Mini-Assisting Hand Assessment (Mini-AHA)

The Mini-AHA was developed due to a recognized need for a psychometrically robust tool to support the assessment and intervention of younger infants during a period of rapid brain development.4 The Mini-AHA demonstrates strong validity.3 Reliability studies are in progress.

**Population:** Young children showing clinical signs of unilateral cerebral palsy.

**Administration & scoring:** Certified raters assemble assessment kit using developmentally appropriate toys that will elicit bimanual play.

**Practice Implications**

The AHA and the Mini-AHA enhance occupational therapy practice by facilitating the enhanced development of occupational therapists’ skills in the areas of assessment, clinical reasoning, intervention planning, family education and ability to communicate with other professionals.

**Outcome Measure**

**Clinical Observation**

**Communication with Families**

**Clinical Education**

**Advocacy**

**Tracking of Development**

**References**


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**Figures**

- **The Kids-Assisting Hand Assessment (Kids-AHA)**
- **The Mini-Assisting Hand Assessment (Mini-AHA)**
- **AHA score form**
- **Translating assessment findings into practice**

**Translating assessment findings into practice**

A Canadian Occupational Therapist’s journey

**Approach**

**Targeted Intervention**

**Ability of AH identified as limiting performance of functional upper limb goal(s).**

**Referral for OT services received**

**Family/child-identified functional goal(s)**

**AHA score form**

**Practice Implications**

**Outcome Measure**

**Clinical Observation**

**Communication with Families**

**Clinical Education**

**Advocacy**

**Tracking of Development**

**References**


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