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We examined the research evidence for interventions used in occupational therapy to promote the motor performance of young children ages 0–5 yr. We identified 24 trials, Levels I–III, that met our review criteria. The studies fell into three categories: (1) developmental interventions for infants (ages 0–3 yr), (2) interventions for young children with or at risk for cerebral palsy (CP), and (3) visual–motor interventions for preschool children (ages 3–5 yr). Developmental interventions showed low positive short-term effects with limited evidence for long-term effects, and findings on the benefits of neurodevelopmental treatment were inconclusive. Interventions using specific protocols for children with CP resulted in positive effects. Visual–motor interventions for children with developmental delays (ages 3–5 yr) resulted in short-term effects on children’s visual–motor performance. Of the intervention approaches used in occupational therapy, those that embed behavioral and learning principles appear to show positive effects.

Case-Smith, J., Frolek Clark, G. J., & Schlabach, T. L. (2013). Systematic review of interventions used in occupational therapy to promote motor performance for children ages birth–5 years. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 67, 413–424. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2013.005959>

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Background: We examined the research evidence for interventions used in occupational therapy to promote the motor performance of young children ages 0–5 yr. We identified 24 trials, Levels I–III, that met our review criteria. The studies fell into three categories: (1) developmental interventions for infants (ages 0–3 yr), (2) interventions for young children with or at risk for cerebral palsy (CP), and (3) visual–motor interventions for preschool children (ages 3–5 yr). Developmental interventions showed low positive short-term effects with limited evidence for long-term effects, and findings on the benefits of neurodevelopmental treatment were inconclusive. Interventions using specific protocols for children with CP resulted in positive effects. Visual–motor interventions for children with developmental delays (ages 3–5 yr) resulted in short-term effects on children’s visual–motor performance. Of the intervention approaches used in occupational therapy, those that embed behavioral and learning principles appear to show positive effects.

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Keywords: motor performance, occupational therapy, young children, interventions, systematic review

Developmental interventions for infants (ages 0–3 yr) showed low positive short-term effects with limited evidence for long-term effects. Interventions for young children with or at risk for cerebral palsy (CP) resulted in positive effects. Visual–motor interventions for preschool children (ages 3–5 yr) resulted in short-term effects on children’s visual–motor performance. Of the intervention approaches used in occupational therapy, those that embed behavioral and learning principles appear to show positive effects.

Abstract: We examined the research evidence for interventions used in occupational therapy to promote the motor performance of young children ages 0–5 yr. We identified 24 trials, Levels I–III, that met our review criteria. The studies fell into three categories: (1) developmental interventions for infants (ages 0–3 yr), (2) interventions for young children with or at risk for cerebral palsy (CP), and (3) visual–motor interventions for preschool children (ages 3–5 yr). Developmental interventions showed low positive short-term effects with limited evidence for long-term effects, and findings on the benefits of neurodevelopmental treatment were inconclusive. Interventions using specific protocols for children with CP resulted in positive effects. Visual–motor interventions for children with developmental delays (ages 3–5 yr) resulted in short-term effects on children’s visual–motor performance. Of the intervention approaches used in occupational therapy, those that embed behavioral and learning principles appear to show positive effects.

Conclusion: Of the intervention approaches used in occupational therapy, those that embed behavioral and learning principles appear to show positive effects.

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Visual-Motor Interventions for Preschoolers

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