

Bursary Report for the British Association of Hand Therapists

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BAHT Level II Bursary

Management of the Thumb

27th – 29th November 2019

Introduction:

I am an occupational therapist working in a regional hand unit. My caseload consists of both trauma related thumb conditions from acute consultant led clinics and referrals for acquired thumb conditions. The course led by NES, was a new course and following a previous positive experience on another BAHT course, I was keen to attend another relevant to my clinical caseload. I applied for a BAHT bursary because the department I work in does not have a specific budget for study leave and therefore the financial support I have received was valuable. The course was interesting and feel it was valuable to my clinical caseload.

Topic:

The Course

The BAHT level II course on Management of the Thumb was based over 3 days. The first day started with an overview of thumb anatomy. I felt this was well presented, and I came away with some great resources to help me with my thumb anatomy that I can share with my department. We then went onto workshops. The workshops were on assessment of the thumb and were valuable as there was a practical element. I was able to consolidate my knowledge on assessing the thumb and gain some useful practical tips for my functional rehabilitation. We looked at the standardised assessments available to assess thumb function as well as assessment of range of movement and sensory assessment. It was enjoyable to have these informal workshops to discuss and learn from other therapists from other hand units on their methods of assessment, treatment and other top tips.

The biomechanics and function of the thumb was a key component of the three days, which for me was a high point. We looked closely at stabilising and deforming forces of the thumb and linked these to practical assessments and treatment methods. This will help me to underpin my treatment, particularly for managing OA thumbs, pre and post-surgery. We looked at rehab resources that we can use in our department to reduce the deforming forces and strengthen the muscles of the thumb to improve function.

Further workshops included oedema management, K-Taping, grip re-training and exercise prescription. All of which were interactive and gave me some good practical tips for me to take home and share with my department. I found the K-Tape workshop of particular interest as I have only used this modality a couple of times. The session has given me confidence to use K-Tape for

oedema management and DeQuervians. The final day included case studies, differential diagnosis and fractures.

Going forward, the key area of learning that I feel will change my practice from this course, is the examination of the deforming forces of the thumb, assessment of the thumb in function, and how I can rehabilitate someone who has developed an alternative and deforming grip pattern. I plan to review the way the service I work in treats trapeziectomy's and improve our rehabilitation programme for this patient group in order to improve functional outcomes. Following on from this service review, I can use the evidence I have learnt from this course to introduce an updated therapy protocol.

I have already shared my learning informally with colleagues and have tried new rehab techniques with a couple of patients. I am looking forward to sharing what I have learnt with the wider MDT in an in-service training and putting into practice what I have learnt as a department.

Many thanks to BAHT for the bursary, and I recommend anyone working in hand therapy to attend a BAHT course to consolidate your learning and gain new knowledge.