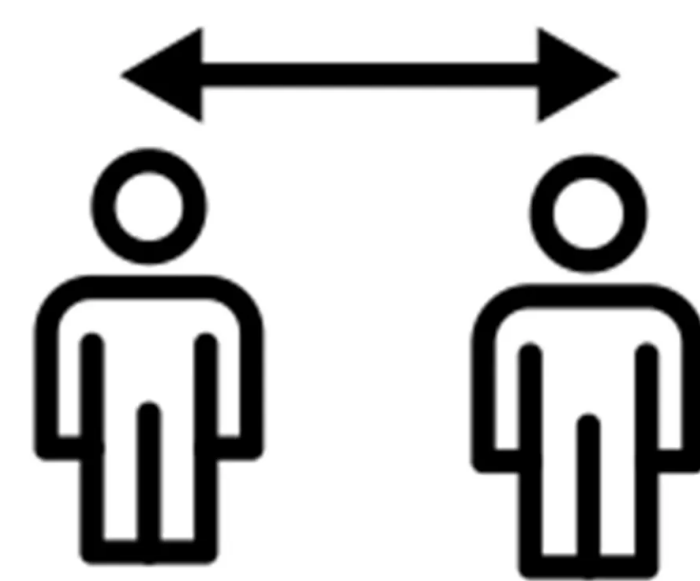
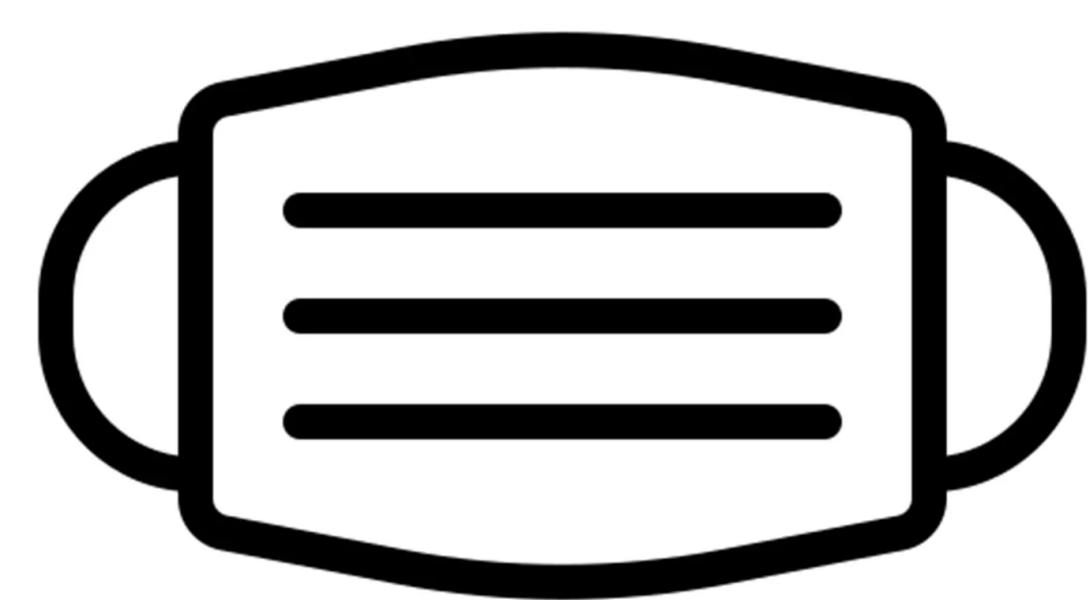


Impact of Public Health Restrictions



(City of Idaho Springs, n.d.)



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Project completed in partial fulfillment of THRT 3710:
Community Based Research

In The Workplace

Research question

From a Therapeutic recreation specialist’s (TRS) perspective, what was the impact of public health restrictions at the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Background

- Public health restrictions included wearing masks, social distancing, and quarantining.
- The therapeutic recreation (TR) service delivery include “therapeutic recreation assessment and documentation, treatment planning and implementation, running programs, managing and organizing service, and direct care” (LeBlane & Singleton, 2008, p. 186).
- More than 85% of TR clients reported communication difficulties because of the implementation of public health measures (Pinsonnault-Skvarenina et al., 2021).
- A lack of understanding has a negative impact on the client’s ability to be actively involved in his own healthcare plan, to make informed decisions and to give consent (Marler & Ditton, 2021).

Research Methods

The **research participants** were 4 Therapeutic Recreation Specialists who:

- Completed a Diploma or Degree program in TR
- a minimum of 5 years’ professional experience
- Hold full-time positions

The **research method** was a one-on-one interview

- 30-60 minutes long, conducted over Zoom
- Transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically
- Pseudonyms were used to maintain participant confidentiality



(Bubaone, n.d.)



(Maggi, 2020)

Findings

	Positive impact	Negative Impact
Mask mandates	People with mental health are comfortable with mask use	Cannot lipread
	Prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus	Cannot hear people especially people who have hearing impairment
		The constant changes in public health restrictions is confusing
Social distancing	It is “more therapeutic” to have a small group of people	Limited access to programs
		Fewer clients can join the program
		Limited opportunities for TRS-client interactions and rapport building
Technology use	Push TRS to adopt new technologies and alternative methods of health promotion	Time consuming with more staff check-ins, and sometimes miscommunication when everything is online
	Allow flexibility and creativity for TRS	Not all clients have the technology or ability to access it
	Higher workloads	Short staff and mental health concerns result in emotional stress and burnout

“For a while they were only allowed one person who was the designated visitor to come in and visit ... If you were one of maybe five people in the family, what were the other four people going to be doing to try to stay connected to grandma or to mom?” (Sharon)

“We did get a mic so that [residents] can hear us... it [wearing masks] restricts their ability to interact with the program because they can’t hear well” (Ellie)

“A lot of [their] care staff really saw the breadth of what recreation therapy means to people” (Sharon)

Discussion

- Wearing masks prevents the spread of COVID-19 virus, however, it decreased understanding, especially for older clients with hearing impairment.
- Social distancing protocols allowed a “more therapeutic” approach to a small group of people, but restricted access to some programs
- Technology use allowed the TRS to be flexible and creative with their clients, however, not all clients had access to the technology and / or the ability to use it.
- The impact of higher workloads allowed the TRS to be more recognized for their efforts in the healthcare system.

Conclusion

This study provided insight into the impacts of public health measures on TR practice and found that there were both positive and negative impacts. It also provided insight into the value of TR in the healthcare system. This research can inspire future discussions about the positive and negative impacts of public health restrictions on vulnerable populations.

Recommendations

To **researchers and educators**:

- Explore the impact of long-term effects of public health restrictions in a TRS’ perspective
- Explore further the value of TRS during the pandemic

To **facilities and agencies**:

- Hire staff who are knowledgeable with communication technology

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