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Investigating Pretend Play Development in Pre-schoolers with an Acquired Brain Injury.

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Play is crucial to children's cognitive development, encouraging problem solving and mastery of new skills (Wyver and Spence, 1995, Ziviani, Boyle & Rodger, 2001). Play is also the context in which social skills and peer relationships are developed (Leipold & Bundy, 2000, Glover, 1998).

Children who have sustained an ABI at a young age are at an increased risk of problems with cognitive and social participation which may only become evident at the time when particular skills are expected to be developed (Mateer & Williams, 1991).

This study was developed to...

1. Determine if children (4.0-5.11 years of age) who have sustained an acquired brain injury (but perform in the average range on cognitive assessment) have a disparity in pretend play skills when compared to normative data.
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of Occupational Therapy intervention in developing pretend play.

Children were assessed using the Child Initiated Pretend Play Assessment (CHIPPA), Peabody Developmental Motor Scales-2 (fine motor subtests) and 2 norm referenced behavioural measures.

Children then attended a 6 week 'pretend play' group run by the Occupational Therapists.

Children were reassessed using all assessments, with pre and post results compared.

We anticipate that...

1. The findings of this study will show children with an acquired brain injury have impaired play skills when compared to peers.
2. Targeted Occupational Therapy intervention will result in improved pretend play.
3. The outcome of this study will lead to a new model of service delivery.

Participants will have an understanding...

1. Of the importance of pretend play as a fundamental building block of cognitive and social development.
2. The profile of play in the ABI population.
3. The effectiveness of targeted Occupational Therapy intervention on the development of pretend play and how to incorporate this into clinical practice.