

Name of Professional: Elissa Cashman

Profession: Occupational Therapist

Company: Speech & Occupational Therapy of North Texas

Date of Interview: November 8, 2017

Assessment:

### The Detrimental Effects of Technology

It is a well known idea that many medical professions are constantly evolving through the development of technology and modern day knowledge. Occupational Therapy is a very great example of this because it is based on social interaction with patients. I gained a lot of new insight regarding the specific effects of technology on Occupational Therapy through my interview with Elissa Cashman, an OTR at Speech & Occupational Therapy of North Texas in Frisco.

My understanding of the issue as she explained it is that being on technology all the time causes children's motor skills to deteriorate, and therefore the job of an OTR is more difficult and often more frustrating because children are resistant to progress. The problem is especially severe for children with an autism spectrum disorder because their social skills are underdeveloped as it is. The results of children's addiction to technology include fits of anger or tantrums when they do not have it, irritability, and most importantly, a lack of physical activity. Playing on the floor and interacting with their environment are some of the most crucial steps in the development of babies' motor skills and situational awareness. Apps and programs designed specifically for kids therefore directly counteract this important stage of life.

This knowledge has actually impacted me greatly because I have shaped my original work around this idea. Originally, I thought it would be beneficial to create a program for kids to use on tablets or computers that helps them develop hand-eye-coordination and other skills of the sort. However, I now know that this is in fact exactly what I should be avoiding. I have developed the idea of a large interactive play structure that gives children the opportunity to use all of their muscles and practice interacting with their surroundings in a fun and engaging way. I realized that this original work plan would therefore refreshingly contrast the typical tools parents use to entertain their kids.

While interviewing Mrs. Cashman, I specifically asked her to elaborate on what happens in the developmental processes of an autistic child, and I simultaneously found out that there has been a significant increase in the number of diagnoses of autism spectrum disorders in recent years. I asked why this was, and apparently hardly any doctors are sure exactly why but it is presumed to have causes traceable to the environment the pregnant mother lives in, since autism is genetic and cannot arise after a child has already been born. However, this slippery slope of diagnoses leads to a great problem in the Occupational Therapy world: OTRs are not meant to diagnose children, so if a therapist suspects that a child has an autism spectrum disorder, they should refer the parents to another doctor prior to commencing significant treatment methods.

Overall, the most significant take-away from this interview was the concept of technology being detrimental to the development of motor and social skills, which I used to develop a plan for my original work. In the future, I look forward to researching in more detail specific motor skills that I should keep in mind when building my original work.

Notes:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B5rBr8Aw6vI0ME5haFNkRTVtMUdWbHfVY3BSR1g0Q2dkNklR/view?usp=sharing>