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Postgraduate Certificate in Ocean Therapy

# Safety and Risk Management in Ocean Therapy.

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## Introduction

Ocean therapy, also known as surf therapy, is a form of therapy that utilizes the ocean environment to promote physical and mental well-being. It has been shown to be effective in improving various health conditions, including anxiety, depression, PTSD, and physical disabilities. However, like any form of therapy that involves physical activity in a natural environment, ocean therapy comes with its own set of risks. Safety and risk management are crucial aspects of ensuring that participants can safely enjoy the benefits of this therapy. This explanation will delve into key terms and vocabulary related to safety and risk management in ocean therapy.

### 1. Risk

Risk is an inherent part of any physical activity, including ocean therapy. It refers to the likelihood of an adverse event occurring during the course of an activity. In ocean therapy, risks can include injuries from falls, collisions with other participants or objects, encounters with marine life, and environmental hazards such as strong currents or rip tides.

Identifying and assessing risks is a crucial step in the risk management process. By understanding the potential risks involved in ocean therapy, therapists and instructors can take steps to mitigate these risks and ensure the safety of participants.

### 2. Hazard

A hazard is a potential source of harm or danger. In the context of ocean therapy, hazards can include natural elements such as waves, currents, and marine life, as well as man-made hazards like boats, surfboards, and other equipment. Identifying hazards is an important part of risk assessment, as it allows therapists and instructors to implement control measures to reduce the likelihood of accidents or injuries.

### 3. Risk Assessment

Risk assessment is the process of evaluating the potential risks and hazards associated with a specific activity. In ocean therapy, risk assessment involves identifying potential risks, assessing the likelihood and severity of these risks, and determining appropriate control measures to mitigate them. By conducting a thorough risk assessment, therapists and instructors can create a safe environment for participants to engage in ocean therapy.

#### 4. Risk Management

Risk management involves the implementation of strategies to minimize risks and ensure the safety of participants. In ocean therapy, risk management may include measures such as providing appropriate safety equipment, implementing safety protocols, conducting regular safety briefings, and monitoring environmental conditions. By effectively managing risks, therapists and instructors can create a safe and enjoyable experience for participants.

#### 5. Safety Briefing

A safety briefing is a meeting or presentation conducted before a therapy session to educate participants about potential risks and safety procedures. During a safety briefing, participants may be informed about hazards such as strong currents or marine life, as well as safety protocols such as how to fall safely or what to do in case of an emergency. Safety briefings are an important component of risk management in ocean therapy, as they help participants understand how to stay safe during the session.

#### 6. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Personal protective equipment, or PPE, refers to equipment worn to minimize exposure to hazards and reduce the risk of injury. In ocean therapy, PPE may include items such as wetsuits, life jackets, helmets, and protective footwear. Providing participants with appropriate PPE is an essential part of risk management, as it helps to ensure their safety during therapy sessions.

#### 7. Emergency Action Plan

An emergency action plan is a set of procedures designed to respond to emergencies or accidents during a therapy session. In ocean therapy, an emergency action plan may include protocols for handling injuries, rescuing participants from the water, and contacting emergency services. Having a well-defined emergency action plan is critical to ensuring the safety of participants and addressing emergencies promptly and effectively.

#### 8. Informed Consent

Informed consent is the process of obtaining permission from participants before engaging in a therapy session. In ocean therapy, therapists and instructors must ensure that participants understand the risks and benefits of the activity and voluntarily agree to participate. By obtaining informed consent, therapists can help participants make informed decisions about their participation in ocean therapy and ensure that they are aware of the potential risks involved.

#### 9. Supervision

Supervision refers to the act of overseeing and guiding participants during a therapy session to ensure their safety. In ocean therapy, supervision may involve therapists or instructors monitoring participants in the

water, providing guidance on proper techniques, and intervening in case of emergencies. Effective supervision is essential to managing risks and ensuring the safety of participants throughout the session.

#### 10. Water Safety

Water safety encompasses a set of practices and protocols designed to prevent accidents and injuries in aquatic environments. In ocean therapy, water safety measures may include assessing water conditions, monitoring participants in the water, implementing buddy systems, and providing instruction on how to navigate waves and currents safely. By prioritizing water safety, therapists and instructors can create a secure environment for participants to engage in ocean therapy.

#### 11. Environmental Awareness

Environmental awareness involves understanding and respecting the natural elements present in the ocean environment. In ocean therapy, therapists and instructors must be aware of factors such as tides, currents, marine life, and weather conditions that can impact the safety of participants. By maintaining environmental awareness, therapists can make informed decisions about when and where to conduct therapy sessions and ensure the well-being of participants.

#### 12. Participant Screening

Participant screening is the process of assessing the physical and mental health of individuals before they participate in a therapy session. In ocean therapy, screening may involve gathering information about participants' medical history, physical fitness, swimming ability, and any existing health conditions. By screening participants, therapists can identify any potential risks or limitations that may affect their ability to safely engage in ocean therapy.

#### 13. Communication

Effective communication is key to ensuring the safety of participants in ocean therapy. Therapists and instructors must maintain clear and open communication with participants, providing instructions, feedback, and guidance throughout the session. Communication can help prevent misunderstandings, clarify safety procedures, and facilitate quick responses in case of emergencies. By prioritizing communication, therapists can create a safe and supportive environment for participants to enjoy the benefits of ocean therapy.

#### 14. Incident Reporting

Incident reporting involves documenting and reporting any accidents, injuries, or near misses that occur during a therapy session. In ocean therapy, therapists and instructors must promptly report incidents to ensure that appropriate follow-up measures can be taken. Incident reports can help identify areas for improvement in safety protocols, prevent future incidents, and ensure the well-being of participants in subsequent therapy sessions.

## 15. Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is the ongoing process of evaluating and enhancing safety practices in ocean therapy. Therapists and instructors should regularly review and update risk assessments, safety protocols, and emergency action plans to address any new risks or challenges that may arise. By prioritizing continuous improvement, therapists can ensure that participants can safely and effectively benefit from ocean therapy.

### Conclusion

Safety and risk management are essential components of ensuring the success and well-being of participants in ocean therapy. By understanding key terms and vocabulary related to safety and risk management, therapists and instructors can create a safe and supportive environment for participants to engage in this unique form of therapy. By identifying risks, implementing control measures, providing appropriate safety equipment, and maintaining effective communication, therapists can help participants enjoy the benefits of ocean therapy while minimizing the potential for accidents or injuries.