

RO&Ming with Lil Episode 3

What are the VROOM and OMO tools?



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Introduction to Episode 3

- Lil Deverell is an Orientation and Mobility specialist based in Melbourne and has been working in O&M since 1993. In 2016, Lil finished a PhD project researching functional vision, orientation and mobility in the context of bionic vision research.
- The most valuable outcome was the VROOM and OMO tools - constructivist assessment tools designed for use during ordinary O&M assessment. They measure a client's functional vision and functional mobility, giving each a score out of 50.
- Can the VROOM and OMO functional assessment tools be used with clients through tele-practice? Yes!
- **This Episode** will describe the VROOM and OMO tools.
- Then we'll meet Ewa Borkowski from GDNSW/ACT to learn what her team plans to do with the VROOM and OMO tools in ordinary O&M practice.

What are the VROOM and OMO tools?

- Each is a single piece of paper – double sided & portable
- Download the VROOM and OMO tools with brief instructions from www.lildeverell.net
- VROOM and OMO look similar – but have different colours and rating scales
 - VROOM – vision related outcomes in O&M – yellow for light/vision
 - OMO – orientation and mobility outcomes – green for grass/walking
- Designed to enhance O&M professional practice, rather than override it
- Don't provide exhaustive checklists of all the things a client could do
- Don't require standardised conditions and tasks that are irrelevant to clients
- They are:
 - Functional assessment tools for use in ordinary O&M assessment.
 - Constructivist measures.
 - They are designed to streamline our professional practice.
 - They produce mixed data: numbers and words.
 - QUALitative priority.

1. Functional assessment tools

Not clinical. In O&M practice, we distinguish between clinical and functional. Clinical assessment happens in controlled standardised conditions. Functional assessment happens in the client's everyday environments.

In O&M assessment, 'functional' doesn't just mean moving and doing what you're told. It is characterised by:

1. Worthiness – every person is unique, equally valuable, and worthy of our attention.
2. Authenticity – what matters to this client?
3. Embodiment – it's easier to show than tell
4. Community – client always located with particular people/places
5. Diversity – people & places evoke different responses
6. Complexity, connections, belonging
7. Haecceity – this moment will never be repeated
8. Learning – any action can prompt insights & change

The VROOM and OMO tools capture what a person can do in everyday life from two angles

- Part A: what a person can do on the day
- Part B: the impact of those skills on their everyday life and wellbeing

2. Constructivist measures

Not objective – objectivity is where everyone already agrees about what something is or what it means, and we can't ever be objective when assessing human behaviour. Behaviour can be interpreted in many ways.

Not subjective – that's one person's opinion about what something means. Important, but needs substantiation. The customer is not always right, and people come to us because they want help, but don't necessarily know what would be helpful.

Ordinary O&M assessment is constructivist. We construct or build knowledge together about what the client can do. This process involves interview and observation of the client in everyday places, in multiple situations. We meet people who know the client and listen to their opinions. We experiment together, we test ideas, make comparisons and build knowledge together about the client's capability and limitations. We learn what matters to the client.

3. Streamlining professional practice

- Clinical measures: reduce complexity, identify variables to measure, then standardize for repeatability, reliability
- Reliability is not the same as validity. Everyday life is messy, inherently complex, variable and unpredictable – this is where we need to measure.
- The O&M Environmental Complexity Scale - rate any environment in the world into one of six levels
- In functional assessment, beware of standardization – it can stop the client behaving in authentic ways.
- Things we cannot standardise in functional assessment:
 - Assessment venues
 - Assessment tasks
 - Language we use with the client
- We can standardise or streamline our own professional practice:
 - The things we all look for in an O&M assessment – what is universally relevant in O&M
 - The ways that we record and interpret what we find
- Aim of VROOM and OMO tools: find common ground across all O&M assessments; use with people of any age, and any level of vision or functional abilities.
- A standardised template to record our customized functional assessments.

4. Mixed data

- **‘Not everything that can be counted, counts and not everything that counts can be counted’** (Einstein)
- Mixed methods is any research that generates both words and numbers, and then analyses the words and numbers together.
- In embedded mixed methods, the words and numbers are captured in the same assessment event, not on separate days.
- NB – vision and mobility skills can fluctuate, so today’s description needs to be analysed with today’s ratings to get a precise score for comparison with other assessments
- While scoring, we can add words that describe unique aspects of the client’s capability.
- Descriptions from previous VROOM and OMO assessments help to interpret what VROOM and OMO scores mean.
- In O&M assessment we recognize tacit, embodied knowledge. We work with the client to describe what he can do. Then numbers help us to reduce wordy data and make comparisons.

5. Qualitative priority

- O&M assessment is qualitative research – we are ethnographers going into the client’s places, choosing observational positions, trying to understand the client’s everyday life.
- We don’t ask, “How do you compare to normal?” We say, “Show me what is normal for you.”
- Rules for good qualitative research
 - check our assumptions; name our subjectivities; own our biases
 - consider many opinions and angles
 - check with the client to make sure our interpretations are correct
 - resonance in the research – meanings mustering true
- Rules for good quantitative research
 - standardization
 - repeatability
 - statistical power
- In mixed methods research, these rules inevitably clash: which approach is more important?
- In functional O&M assessment a Qualitative priority is needed to capture authentic client experiences.
- If you are using VROOM and OMO and it all gets a bit messy, then stop and do what works for the client. That is always more important than generating numbers.

Co-rating

- **Who takes part?** The rating decisions happen on the spot. Interview and observe the client's travel, then sit down together for a co-rating conversation.
- Co-rating always includes the assessor and client, but others can join in.
- If the client has difficulty speaking (speech issues, intellectual disability, brain injury) then have someone there who can help you to interpret the client's communication.
- **Interpret the scales.** Every number on the scales is described, but if those words aren't right for your client, then you need to use words that will make sense to the client.
- E.g., in Part A, Checking Groundplane is about recognising hazards, and falls risk, then having the confidence to step out.
 - Ask a 10 year old, “What’s underfoot?” and “Is it safe to step out?”
 - Ask a baby’s mum, “What happens when Jackie’s shoes are off? Does she react to different textures with her feet? Does she reach out to feel things with her feet?”
- The assessor often leads the ratings in part A; the client usually leads the ratings in part B
- Responses can be surprising; differences in rating should lead to questions and clarification.
- You don't have to agree with every rating. The rule is: **If in doubt, rate lower.**

Ewa

- Practice coordinator for all O&M services at GDNSW/ACT (not GD mobility)
- Role to support O&M – General O&M, children, early childhood, neuro
- Staff – attend PD 1 x month and discuss
 - Scope of practice
 - Situational responses
 - New ways to deliver services
 - New aids/equipment
- Thanks to Ewa for:
 - valuing the uniqueness of Australian O&M culture; recognising the importance of Australian research that fits with our local practice
 - seeing the potential in the VROOM and OMO tools and supporting the team at GDNSW/ACT to use them
 - supporting me to face the perils of podcasting, with some podcasting pals

Contacts / Resources

- Find out more about embedded mixed methods research with a QUAL/quan priority:

Creswell, J.W. & Plano Clark, V. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. 2 ed. Sage.
- VROOM and OMO tools, and PowerPoint slides for *RO&Ming with Lil* :
www.lildeverell.net/resources
- Discuss VROOM and OMO, offer feedback, suggest a topic, or record an episode together:
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Credits

- Music
 - *Happy Stroll*, a royalty-free download from Purple Planet Music
- Graphics created by Lil Deverell with
 - technotherapy from Erin Deverell
 - photos from
 - An amateur drone photographer from Cornwall, flying over a spaghetti junction in Birmingham (royalty-free)
 - Christine Darwood, a wildlife spotter in the ACT who snapped our sprightly echidna crossing the road (used with permission)
 - Rob Keating, a Canberra-based photographer, who found a weathered wombat crossing the road (purchased from <https://keatingmedia.com.au>)

