

Learning by Doing: Creating Knowledge for Occupational Therapy

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As occupational therapists, we open doors to occupation. Occupational therapists work with individuals of all ages, groups or organizations who are at risk for decreased participation. The goal of occupational therapy is to enable persons to engage in occupations that support and bring meaning to daily life. Participation in occupation is a vital part of the human condition and lived experience - it leads to life satisfaction, a sense of competence, and is essential for psychological, emotional and skill development.

With this vision, we have a responsibility to create and use knowledge to ensure our commitment to the rights of all persons to participate fully in everyday living. Over the past 30 years, we have gained substantive knowledge from occupational therapy research, occupational science and other disciplines. Sources of knowledge for occupational therapy come from person/client's need, values, dreams, therapist wisdom and reasoning and research.

In this talk, we will examine how we use current knowledge and how we can create the knowledge needed for the future. We have a responsibility to build a knowledge creation process consistent with occupational therapy values. The creation and use of knowledge is complex and does not happen automatically. Given this complexity, we must guard against a focus on creating knowledge that applies universally and does not take into account culture, context and needs.

Building on these concepts, we will explore ways in which occupational therapists can build knowledge. Specifically, we will consider dimensions of knowledge, knowledge creation frameworks, knowledge translation and the process of learning. Occupational therapists, individuals or groups receiving our services, and researchers are all integral to our future creation and use of knowledge.

Occupational therapy is centred on the value of and need for participation in meaningful occupation. As we come together in Chile, let us examine the ways in which we focus on knowledge creation, the use of knowledge, and lifelong learning. Knowledge creation in occupational therapy can be a wonderful journey – bringing together experience and action to learn by doing.