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The Value of Specialist Training for Occupational Therapists

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Introduction

After completing a Master's degree in occupational therapy and gaining at least five years of occupational therapy professional experience the individual can apply for the training. The special training comprises 40 weeks of study.

In total, 35 occupational therapists in Sweden have gone through the training. The intention of the training is to support the development of high quality occupation therapy praxis and to facilitate advancement for occupation therapists.

Objectives

The aim was to investigate the value of the specialist training for occupational therapists.

Method

All occupational therapists that had gone through the specialist training (OTS) were included. A random control group (OT) was identified based on age, year since graduation as an occupational therapist, and area of experience. A web questionnaire containing 27 questions was used. For 11 questions a 6-point Likert-type scale was used to investigate how the responders evaluated their own capacity and opportunities to influence their work situation. Supervising was also investigated.

Results

In total, 48 occupational therapists responded to the questionnaire, 25 from the OTS group and 23 from the OT group. The main finding was that all responders ranked their capacity highly; they felt they had the knowledge required for practice, and that they could solve complex problems in an effective way. There was a small difference regarding use of research results in practice. The OT group also identified more areas where they needed new and additional knowledge. Furthermore, the OTS group supervised other colleagues and other staff more, and took part in education of undergraduate occupational therapy students more.

Conclusion

Occupational therapists with specialist training degrees need to be more attended in praxis. There is a need to promote a higher level of competence and to encourage the use of more comprehensive knowledge.

Contribution to practice

Occupational therapists with special training can make a valuable contribution to practice. They can offer supervision of colleagues in complex cases, they can reduce the gap between research and practice, and they can offer services to client with special needs.