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Mental well being: Activities and outcomes or not?

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Introduction: This workshop will challenge delegates to review their assumptions about the positive relationship between activities and mental well being. Research is providing contradictory evidence for this dearly held belief that underpins occupational therapy. During the workshop, some of this research will be presented and appraised against the audience's experience. The intention is to highlight the need for simplicity and clarity about definitions and outcomes. Precision is vital not merely to aid research or communication, but to promote mental well being because "an individual's mental capital and mental wellbeing crucially affect their path through life. Moreover, they are vitally important for the healthy functioning of families, communities and society. Together, they fundamentally affect behaviour, social cohesion, social inclusion, and our prosperity" (Foresight, 2008 p10).

The learning objectives are to:

1. Examine the ambiguity surrounding concepts such as activities/occupations, health and well being;
2. Compare and contrast ways of defining the health benefits of activities, using knowledge from occupational therapy/occupational science and other disciplines;
3. Discuss the 'five activities' (connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give) for mental well being;
4. Reflect upon the need to understand the causal mechanisms and mediating factors between activities and mental well being.

Length of time: 1.5 hours

Description of teaching methods: The workshop will be interactive to facilitate sharing knowledge and experience. Brief presentations will be followed by discussions in small groups and plenary sessions.

Maximum number of participants: 30

Aked J, Marks N, Cordon C, Thompson S (2008) Five ways to wellbeing. A report presented to the Foresight Project on communicating the evidence base for improving people's well-being. Available at the new economics foundation website:

<http://www.neweconomics.org/gen/uploads/42a0d345snadwj45duze0iim22102008153312.pdf>

Accessed on 26.4.09.

Creek J & Hughes A (2008) Occupation and health: a review of selected literature. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71, 11, 456-467.

Foresight Mental Capital and Wellbeing Project (2008). Final Project report - Executive summary. The Government Office for Science, London. Available at:

http://www.foresight.gov.uk/Mental%20Capital/Mental_capital_&_wellbeing_Exec_Sum.pdf Accessed on 26.4.09.