

0348

Focusing assessments on occupation

Adrain Thomas¹, Anne Roberts²

¹Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital, Exeter, Devon, United Kingdom, ²University of Plymouth, Exeter, Devon, United Kingdom

Introduction

Occupational therapy is based on the core tenet that occupation is beneficial to a person's health and wellbeing. Therefore assessment of occupational performance and use of occupational interventions are core skills (Law et al 2005; Wilcock 2006). Despite this theoretical agreement, there has been some recent debate about the extent to which current practice is occupation focused (Molineux 2004).

Objectives

This study investigated experienced UK occupational therapists' beliefs about assessment, including the extent to which they are occupation focussed.

Method

A convenience sample of 16 occupational therapy Masters Degree students contributed to an asynchronous on-line discussion concerning the extent to which their assessments were occupation focussed. Permission was given by the students and the university ethics committee to use the written accounts of this discussion as research data. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data.

Results

Participants recognized the value of focusing on occupation in their assessments, whilst also recognizing the benefits of using other approaches, such as assessment of component skills. However, therapists may find themselves in a situation where they cannot assess with an occupational focus and this may be brought about by constraints of the practice context. Furthermore, influences such as client needs and health care policy also affect the potential to focus on occupation in practice. Some practitioners may feel a focus on occupation is not relevant to their setting.

Conclusion

Therapists should try to concentrate on occupational goals to remain true to the core domain of the profession, otherwise there may be confusion over professional roles and a loss of the therapeutic focus on occupation. Ignoring occupational assessments may endanger the professional identity of occupational therapy.

Contribution to practice /evidence base of occupational therapy

These findings should encourage discussion on the importance of practising in an occupation focused way.

Law M, Baum C and Dunn, W. (2005). *Measuring Occupational Performance*. 2nd ed. New Jersey: Slack Incorporated.

Molineux M (2004). Introduction, in Molineux, M. (Ed) *Occupation for Occupational Therapists*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Wilcock A (2006). *An Occupational Perspective of Health*. 2nd ed. Thorofare: Slack Incorporated.

