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Contributions and Challenges of Aging Exiles to the Domain of Occupational Therapy

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Introduction: Exiles handle the trauma of persecution in their home country, emigration, and integration into a new home over the course of their lives in various ways. As they age they may exhibit unresolved experiences from the past in their daily behavior. Their need for therapy services is more likely. At the same time, because of these unresolved past issues, these potential clients may reject interventions and be labeled as "therapy-resistant" or "difficult clients". This poster discusses what occupational therapists can learn from these clients in order to engage them, build respectful therapeutic relationships, and achieve team outcomes.

The objectives are to: 1) share the results of a research project with the "Jekkes", a group of veteran German speaking Jewish immigrants to Israel, and 2) provide guidelines for geriatric occupational therapy practitioners.

Methodology used in this qualitative study included an adapted version of the Occupational Performance History Interview (OPHI II) (Kielhofner et al., 2004) with three residents of a Parents Home in Israel as well as extensive observation. The data were analyzed using narrative analysis suggested by Riessman (1993). Results revealed that the participants demonstrated special abilities such as taking extreme responsibility, performing a high level of engagement in occupations despite severe physical impairments, and maintaining their own cultural values. They also demonstrated a special need to keep control, were highly fearful of accepting physical help, and increasingly experienced isolation. Conclusion: The integration of narratives and recognition of the particular needs of aging exiles for participation support a successful therapeutic process.

Contribution to the practice of occupational therapy: Successful occupational therapy practice must emphasize understanding and validation of the client's individual reality based on the therapist's own awareness of biases and interests in diverse cultural contexts.

Reference List:

- 1) Riessman, C.K. (1993). Narrative Analysis. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- 2) Kielhofner, G., Mallinson, Y., Crawford C., Nowak, M. Rigby, M., Henry, A. & Walens, D. (2004). The Occupational Performance History Interview (Version 2.1) OPHI II. Chicago: Model of Human Occupation Clearinghouse, University of Illinois.