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Activity Systems, Environmental Affordances and Attachment to Community Among Manual Wheelchair Users

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Introduction

This study identifies environmental attributes of place attachment by wheelchair users. Place attachment describes the bonds that people make with certain places and includes things like memories, interests and social connections. These concepts are central to the practice of occupational therapy. Current literature on place attachment does not include information about disabled people, even though they form the largest cultural group. This study begins the process of describing place attachment by disabled people. Once important environmental attributes are identified, occupational therapists can modify their focus to better meet client needs.

Objectives

The main objective of this research is to identify how manual wheelchair users engage in activities in their neighborhoods and whether their neighborhoods and activities predict place attachment. This research will identify how participation in neighborhood and community activities effects place attachment of manual wheelchair users. Additionally, the research will describe the salient issues regarding place attachment for wheelchair users.

Methods

A semi structured interview is used to collect data. Principles of grounded theory are used to develop theoretical concepts and postulates related to environmental attachment in wheelchair users.

Results

Participants will be interviewed until theoretical saturation is reached. The results will be comprised of a theory of attachment in manual wheelchair users. Major themes will be shared during this presentation. Specific case examples demonstrate the themes.

Conclusion

Comparisons in place attachment between wheelchair users and the general population are discussed. The presenter will describe how this new knowledge should impact the treatment and practice of OTs.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of OT

There is little OT literature regarding attachment to place by disabled people. The practice of occupational therapists focuses on getting people to participate in home and community activities. Because we have not yet fully investigated the environmental attributes that contribute to satisfaction with the community by people with disabilities, we are at a disadvantage in providing optimal services. This presentation will introduce the topic to OTs and will begin to identify the salient issues that occupational therapists need to consider in their treatment of clients.