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Participation discussed from an occupational perspective

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Participation has rapidly become an internationally used concept in relation to health. Occupational Therapy has also very quickly adopted participation and sometimes uses it as more or less exchangeable with occupation. This is understandable but we make a serious mistake if we use them interchangeable especially since the definition adopted in the ICF (International Classification of Function) excludes a person's subjective experience. Instead we need to discuss and problematise the different concepts. Research in occupational therapy has shown that these concepts are not synonymous even if they have a close relationship to each other. Participation can exist without occupation and vice versa. More importantly different forms of participation can be identified from empirical research. A model will be presented where we argue that occupation and participation can form a dyad where each contribute to strengthen the quality of the other. The model could be used for a better understanding of participation problems and for an understanding of the different forms of participation that an individual could experience.