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Towards a culture-specific theory applicable within occupational therapy in Sweden/Scandinavia

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Introduction

Different models/theories about the relationship between human occupation and health, a core assumption in occupational therapy, have been adopted in Sweden. However, no theory of the relationship between occupation and health, grounded in a Swedish or Scandinavian context, has so far been presented. The existing models /theories are mainly based on theoretical assumptions originated from the USA and Canada. Although the USA, Canada and Sweden all are included in a western culture, there may be differences between the countries. These differences may influence the view of occupation, health and the relationships between the concepts. A clarification and better understanding of the core concept occupation could also contribute to increase the performance of empirical studies which is an urgent need within the area.

Objectives

The aim of this project is to develop a theory, based on Swedish empirical grounds, concerning the dimensions of occupation and its relation to health.

Methods

Grounded Theory is used as a key method in this project including a series of empirical studies.

Conclusion

The process towards a Swedish/Scandinavian theory applicable within occupational therapy is ongoing. A first core category has been presented: "The what, why and how of occupation". The following studies have been performed and completed: 1) A literature review of the meaning of Swedish terms compatible with occupation, activity, doing and task; 2) A study among novice occupational therapy students in Sweden; 3) A follow up study among occupational therapy students in Sweden. A fourth study, a Delphi-study among Swedish experts concerning the concept of occupation is in manuscript. For the time being, the following studies are planned: 1) qualitative interviews among occupational therapists in Sweden and, 2) a survey-study among occupational therapist in Sweden/Scandinavia.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

A cultural-specific theory will contribute to the process of professionalization for occupational therapists in Sweden. A clarification of the terms occupation and its relationship to health may also facilitate and thereby enhance performance of empirical studies which are an urgent need in occupational therapy.