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Reclaiming an "occupational" identity: Therapists' journey towards provision of a more occupational, evidenced-based service

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Introduction. A discipline specific role in medium term, community-based residential psychiatric rehabilitation - it sounds like a dream job; so why is it so difficult? Faced with diverse client needs, the legacy of institutionalisation, and a changing service focus, occupational therapists questioned if they had lost their way, having been reduced to being assessors of function, group facilitators, and diversional therapists.

Objectives. This presentation reviews the journeys of therapists searching for their professional identity within a multidisciplinary team in a largely medical setting: first by articulating the challenges faced in providing evidence-based, occupationally-focussed therapy, and then by identifying the theory and strategies used to move forward. The subjective experience of therapists searching for their professional identities is explored, along with an evaluation of the impact of changes made.

Report/Discussion. The Model of Human Occupation (Kielhofner, 2008) was used as a framework for the conceptualisation and delivery of occupational therapy. MOHO-based assessments were incorporated into regular practice, enhancing the theoretical and evidence base of assessment, formulation and intervention. Various formats were trialled for informal and formal reporting of findings and recommendations, to identify how best to incorporate and communicate occupational concepts with clients and staff. Formal and informal education was provided to staff and students of other disciplines, as therapists strove to provide clear, occupational rationales for their work.

Conclusion/ Contribution to OT. Occupational therapists found that use of the MOHO and associated assessments, reflection on practice, and trial and review of various service delivery strategies enabled them to reclaim their professional identities by providing a more occupational, evidenced-based service. This led to strengthened service-provision to clients, and increased job satisfaction for occupational therapists. This journey provides a contemporary clinical example of the process of applying theory and best-practice concepts within an existing service.

Reference

Kielhofner, G. (2008). *The Model of Human Occupation: Theory and application*. 4th ed. Baltimore: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.