

## The Development of Competencies for New Graduate Occupational Therapists Working Within Community Based Rehabilitation - Melbourne, Australia

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**Introduction:** Recent changes in health care have resulted in greater dependence in Occupational Therapy services being provided in ambulatory settings including clients' homes, the community or rehabilitation centres. Occupational Therapists therefore need to work autonomously, in often unfamiliar environments to provide a high quality service to clients, despite the amount of experience or knowledge that they have. The challenge of ensuring that new graduates or therapists with limited experience are providing an adequate, client-centred Occupational Therapy service to clients in these settings has emerged. **Objective:** The need for a detailed tool to assist in ensuring that new graduate therapists are providing a high quality service within a Community Based Setting was identified.

**Description:** Benchmarking with Community Rehabilitation Services revealed that professional responsibility of ensuring appropriate provision of Occupational Therapy service is usually designated to the individual professional and to their supervisor, usually a more experienced Therapist. This evaluation has typically been established by the Occupational Therapists involved, largely being an informal and ad hoc process. Formal systems or tools for reviewing clinical competency for providing Occupational Therapy services within adult Community Based Rehabilitation services in Victoria, Australia have been limited and non-specific to the area of practice. Six experienced Occupational Therapists were interviewed to establish how they reviewed new graduates professional capabilities, within the Community Based Rehabilitation setting. A range of qualities and skills were established as essential components to providing adequate Occupational Therapy services. Therapists also reported that methods to evaluate competency involved theoretical review, observation, discussion of clinical reasoning and documentation appraisal. **Results:** These qualities were collated into an easy to follow tool outlining specific Occupational Therapy competencies, the step by step process of how they are demonstrated and methods a supervisor should pursue to ensure new graduate's competence.

**Conclusion/Contribution to Practice:** The tool was found to be useful for assessing clinical competence of new graduate Occupational Therapists within two large Community Based Services in Melbourne, following review by experienced and new graduate Occupational Therapists. Further research is required to establish the reliability and validity of the tool and whether it can be applied to other services.