

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY, PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL LIFE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY: AN EXPERIENCE INVOLVING ASSISTANCE , EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

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Introduction. Since 2002, a project involving teaching, assistance and research in a primary health care program has been developed in a poor neighborhood of São Paulo (Brazil). It intends to support people with disability in exercising their essential rights, inasmuch as occupational therapy interventions consider impairment/disability to be the result of a complex social process, determined by the relationship between person/family and the social-cultural context they live in.

Objectives. To understand the social context in which processes of exclusion and social disqualification are experienced by people with disability and their families. These processes appear in the form of home isolation and lack of information and access to rights. To enable those involved to become active in promoting worthiness and participation of people with disability in the social life.

Procedures. A gradual registration of 240 people with disabilities and a search of the local resources were carried out by the occupational therapists of the health service and the university and, by students with the help of health teams and local dwellers. Debates with the health teams and the community and, visits to households, schools and nurseries were implemented in order to characterize the participation in social life and the degree to which people have access to rights. Modes of intervention: 1. Home follow-up (assistance and social participation promotion) 2. 'Coexistence' groups (to promote the circulation outside home and collective projects) 3. Regular meetings of people with disabilities, family members, dwellers, professionals and students, for the discussion of strategies to access rights (education, adapted transport, help equipment and social benefits) and for culture and leisure activities.

Contributions for practice: An increase in the access to health care, assistive technology (wheel chairs, crutches and adaptations), school, specialized services and adapted transport was observed. There was also an increase in social participation and empowerment of people with disability and their families and the acknowledgement of the experience with disability as a dimension of human life. This experience promotes the understanding/intervention of the complexity of daily life and includes the social dimension of the disability in teaching and research in occupational therapy.