

Housing Adaptations in Sweden: Needs for Quality Development in Occupational Therapy Practice

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Housing adaptations are common interventions in community-based occupational therapy, aiming at removing physical environmental barriers in order to enhance an independent life. In Sweden, the full costs for housing adaptations are granted if the client's need is certified by a professional, usually an occupational therapist. In the society at large, more efficient approaches to housing provision for citizens with special needs are called for, but when it comes to housing adaptations there is a lack of systematic, research-based approaches to the intervention. The aim of this study was to survey how Swedish occupational therapists administer housing adaptation cases, and to investigate their perceptions of the quality of the housing adaptation process, and quality development needs. In close cooperation with the Swedish Association of Occupational Therapists, FSA, a full scale investigation was carried out by means of a web-based questionnaire survey comprising eight major questions targeting different aspects of the housing adaptation process. In all, 1,679 occupational therapists, working at county council primary health care centres or in municipality health care services, responded. The majority of them did not use any standardised assessment of the applicant's activity and participation, or of the physical home environment. Instead they used interviews or checklists with unknown scientific quality, to conduct their needs assessments. Less than ten percent evaluated the intervention on a regular basis, and they rarely used any structured evaluation procedure. They perceived a lack of feedback on case progress, and they also perceived that the co-operation with other actors in the process was insufficient. Many of them were very concerned about the content and format of the housing adaptation certificate. In spite of this, the majority of the occupational therapists perceived that the quality of the housing adaptation process was good or rather good, while more education, research and information were requested for quality improvement purposes. This study produced valuable knowledge and important information about the quality of the Swedish housing adaptation process and has potential to nurture practice development. The results will also serve as an important resource for the development of an evidence-based housing adaptation case-management model.