

1266

An exploration of the daily occupations of Irish older adults; is there potential for health promotion?

Gemma Byrne, Margaret Mc Grath

National University of Ireland, Galway, Galway, Ireland

Background

Evidence from American (Clark et al., 1997, Matuska, 2003) and English research (Mountain, 2008) supports health promotion with older adults. Health promotion with this population has not been researched in Ireland allowing for the difference in health care systems, culture and attitudes.

Method

A qualitative research design was adopted using semi-structured interviews adapted from the Well Elderly Study (Clark et al., 1997). A pilot study of the interview was completed to test for unnecessary or inappropriate questions. Six independent living older adults from three recruitment sources were interviewed. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that the information was rich and varying in themes. Content analysis was used to analysis the data into themes. Peer debriefing validated the themes identified.

Results

The themes that emerged were Social Support, Health, Occupational Identity and Modern Life. The main findings identified the importance of social support and access to transport and the affects of health related problems or aging has on daily occupations and occupational identity.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

Health, transport and social contact are significantly important for engaging in meaningful occupations and maintaining a mental well-being. This study further identifies the need and potential for preventive occupational therapy health promotion in Ireland.