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Reflection on a community mental health role emerging placement within a Clubhouse programme.

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As an occupational therapy student at Northumbria University in the UK when I was offered the chance to take a role emerging placement within a community based Clubhouse, I accepted the opportunity with great enthusiasm.

The objective of this abstract is to reflect on my experience as a student occupational therapist on my role emerging placement.

The challenge was to develop a role for myself within Clubhouse working alongside staff and supporting Clubhouse members in the community. Clubhouse is a global model and provides support for people recovering from mental illness to get back into mainstream employment or education. Within Clubhouse there are task areas that members can work to learn and develop skills. There is reception/administration, maintenance, kitchen and garden.

At Clubhouse I developed a confidence and assertiveness course and also participated in a community garden project. I presented to the staff team about occupational therapy, activity analysis and how theories of occupation fitted into the Clubhouse environment. An idea emerged to incorporate activity analysis into how Clubhouse informs potential or existing members of what each work tasks involves and what occupational performance skills they could develop or learn.

Watson (2004) discusses health promotion and asserts that new approaches within occupational therapy practice should include operating at a community and population level. Findings from a study by Kennedy-Jones et al (2005) which considers the role of a Clubhouse programme, urges occupational therapists to provide opportunities to provide support for people with mental illness who want paid employment.

Through the experience of this role emerging placement I feel I have demonstrated that there is a role for occupational therapy within a Clubhouse programme supporting members based in the community.

References

Kennedy-Jones, M., Cooper, J. & Fossey, E. (2005) 'Developing a worker role: Stories of four people with mental illness', Australian Occupational Therapy Journal, 52, pp. 116-126.

Watson, R. (2004) 'New Horizons in Occupational Therapy', in Watson, R. & Swartz, L. (ed.) Transformation through occupation. London: Whurr Publishers Ltd, pp. 3-18.