

Beyond competency: Specialisation and advanced occupational therapy practice

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The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) has developed entry-level competencies for occupational therapists. These competencies were the result of a long-term project by a WFOT Project Team and were endorsed at the 2008 WFOT Council Meeting in Slovenia. The competencies provide a framework of standards "to inform occupational therapists, education providers, governments, consumers and others of the competencies that entry-level occupational therapists should demonstrate."

The next stage in setting an international competency structure for the profession is to define the competencies required for competence in different practice settings at each cycle or level. The objectives for this project are to define post entry-level competencies for specialisation and advanced level occupational therapy and to develop a framework of requirements for competence to practice in specialist and advanced areas.

The initial task for the project group is to examine the scope of specialised practice and occupational therapy specialties. Already a review of the literature shows the varying picture world-wide, with some member countries have identified specialty areas, while others are keen to develop a framework for this in the face of increasing pressure from within the occupational therapy professional groups.

The aim in presenting this paper at the WFOT Congress is to raise professional awareness in regard to this project and to seek the input of therapists internationally. The paper will outline some of the proposed post entry-level areas that are being considered and characteristics that make these areas of specialised practice. Further, the implications of moving the profession into areas of specialised practice will be discussed.