

Expanding Practice to Address Infant Mortality at a Micro and Macro Level

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Of the Sub-Saharan African countries of highest risk, 66 in 1,000 newborns do not live past their first month of life (PMNCH, 2006). The crisis of infant mortality not only presents a great loss of human capital, but also has great political and economic ramifications. Occupational Therapy is well positioned to positively impact this phenomenon by partnering with traditional medical practices and extending individual OT practice to include families, community service providers, medical educators and policy makers.

Objectives

To increase awareness of the importance of infant health in a state's comprehensive development.

To clearly define how OT is well positioned to expand into public health models by creating alliances with traditional and nontraditional community partners in order to disseminate best practices resulting in sustainable change

Description/Report

This paper will include a comprehensive assessment of the significant impact of infant mortality on a nation's development, and will define how OT practices compliment the public health dialogue concerning infant mortality rates at the micro and macro levels. In addition, it will illustrate the micro application of interventions as in the case study of an interdisciplinary team who traveled to Tanzania (June 2008) to work in collaboration with nursery physicians to institute developmental care that is sensitive to the infants' fragile physiologies.

Conclusion

Participants will recognize how OT is well positioned to work within the public health framework to combat infant mortality through low-tech interventions and infusion of nontraditional practices into community and public policy.

Contributions

This paper seeks to highlight the societal impact of infant mortality rates and the role of the occupational therapy community in combating this issue. The paper aims to galvanize practice from individual-based interventions to create a nexus of education and information with all levels of caregivers in order to maximize the impact of modalities.

Lawn, J and Kerber, K (2006). Opportunities for Africa's Newborns: Practical data, policy and programmatic support for newborn care in Africa. Partners for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, Cape Town.