

Work, mental health and well being: a scoping study of the interdisciplinary research

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Introduction

Mental ill health has an effect on a person's ability to maintain or gain employment and this has wider social and economic implications. A range of professionals, including occupational therapists, use vocational rehabilitation to support people with mental health issues to stay in, or secure, meaningful work.

Objective

To develop an understanding of the interdisciplinary research that has been conducted in relation to work, mental health and well being to inform practice and future research programmes.

Methods

A scoping study was conducted (Arksey and O'Malley 2005). The review questions were refined and a wide ranging search strategy was developed and executed (Stages 1-3). The results were charted using policy as a framework because policy statements had been developed by the World Health Organisation, the European Community and the UK government (Stages 4-5). A consultation event was held with key stakeholders (N=9), including service users and carers, to assess how far the literature identified reflected current practice within vocational rehabilitation (Stage 6).

Results

More narratives, opinion and practice evaluations were identified than research. There was limited evidence about interventions; most of the research papers focused on individual placement and support (IPS) for people with severe mental illness. There was a dearth of literature about work and people with common mental illness. Whilst IPS has the most evidence of effectiveness the acceptability of IPS was questioned during the consultation event. It was suggested that this reflected a lack of service user and carer involvement in the research conducted to date.

Conclusion

There is a limited evidence base for practice other than IPS. This provides a foundation for building a research programme which should involve service users and carers. Two key areas for future research are using an occupation to develop alternative interventions to IPS and interventions to support people experiencing common mental illnesses.

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

This review provides a clear indication of what research has been conducted about work, mental health and well being worldwide.

Reference

Arksey H, O'Malley L (2005) Scoping studies: Towards a methodological framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8(1) 19-32

