

New Ways of Working for Mental Health Occupational Therapists

Genevieve Smyth

College of Occupational Therapists, London, United Kingdom

Introduction

Occupational practice in mental health is changing as new and exciting roles open up to occupational therapists. These developments are endorsed by the College of Occupational Therapists as they aim to improve the client experience and increase career pathways.

Objectives

To report on the opportunities and challenges of moving into novel areas of practice in the United Kingdom (UK).

Report

The UK Government acknowledges that many mental health teams feel their jobs are impractical with high caseloads and low staff morale. Teams are therefore encouraged to go through a complete re-training process with clients and carers which primarily considers what people with mental health problems need and who has the competencies to meet these needs. Traditional role boundaries are being disbanded as teams embrace a redistribution of responsibility (Care Services Improvement Partnership 2007).

Discussion

Occupational therapists are therefore challenged to carry out more creative, cross boundary working whilst still ensuring client's occupational needs are met. Ongoing debate exists about how to retain occupation at the profession's core while moving into new areas of practice and how new roles will effect the therapeutic relationship, insurance cover and pay arrangements (College of Occupational Therapists 2006).

Conclusion

Occupational therapy practice is now less affected by job title or professional silo working and therapists have increased freedom to move into new areas of practice.

Contribution to Practice

Therapists are now in addition to offering occupation based services, more involved in the delivery of psychological therapies, the administration of medication and have new roles under mental health legislation (National Institute for Mental Health in England 2008). These new roles embrace the social model of health, acknowledge the client's occupational needs and the profession's occupational expertise.

References

College of Occupational therapists (2006) *Recovering Ordinary Lives - the strategy for occupational therapy in mental health services 2007-2017*. London, COT.

Care Services Improvement Partnership (2007) *Mental Health: New ways of working for everyone*. London, Department of Health

National Institute for Mental Health in England (2008) *Mental Health Act 2007 New roles*. London, NIMHE.