

## Occupational Therapy in the Future: Perspectives from Occupational Therapy students in Chile, Sweden and Spain

Diego Cifuentes<sup>1</sup>, Staffan Josephsson<sup>2</sup>, Rodrigo Sepúlveda<sup>1</sup>, Evelyn Alvarez<sup>1</sup>, Sebastian Gallegos<sup>1</sup>, Camila Castro<sup>1</sup>, Valentina Salinas<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile, <sup>2</sup>Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

**Introduction:** Occupational therapy students today will be the future scholars and professionals of occupational therapy. Therefore it is of value to explore reflections and perspectives on future occupational therapy from occupational therapy students. Further this it is of particular interest because the few existing studies on perspectives from occupational therapy students. **Objective:** To identify and compare expectations on future occupational therapy from occupational therapy students from different countries. **Method:** Participants were selected with help of purposeful sampling among occupational therapy students in third year of their occupational therapy education. Data has been gathered with help of focus groups interviews conducted by occupational therapy students that had received special training by experienced researchers. Three of the focus group interviews were conducted in Chile, one in Sweden and one in Spain. 5 to 7 occupational therapy students participated in each group. Data analysis was made with a help of a qualitative comparative method. **Results:** Analyses identified that issues around the identity of the profession was a central theme in the participant's reflections. Further participants expressed ambition to expand the profession beyond its current scope. Finally having the possibility to engage in discussion about the professions future was identified as a value of its own. **Conclusions:** Discussions about the future role and development of the profession and its practice might need further attention in basic occupational therapy education. **Contribution to the practice base of occupational therapy:** This study is a contribution to the limited research existing on perspectives from occupational therapy students. Further it combines perspectives from different educational and professional and geographical cultures.