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Rebuilding Torture Affected Communities: Collaborations and Connections

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Introduction:

Despite the fact that torture is forbidden and condemned universally, it is practiced on a systematic basis in over 150 countries worldwide. The chance of working with a survivor of torture in any practice setting is an increasing reality. The onus is on occupational therapists, along with other health care workers, to provide credible torture and trauma informed care with an awareness of the environmental challenges and resulting occupational deprivation survivors encounter.

Objectives/Aims:

To promote awareness of the systemic use and effects of politically motivated torture on the daily lives of individual survivors and communities.

To describe ways occupational therapists, in collaboration with survivors of torture, can help to rebuild meaningful lives and sustainable communities.

Description:

Collaborations between survivors and occupational therapists are not only relevant but imperative when attempting to comprehend the unthinkable events survivors of torture have endured.

The presentation will overview:

The sociopolitical systems that sustain torture;

The continuing effects of torture, displacement and injury on a survivors' ability to perform meaningful occupational roles;

Guiding principles of OT care embedded within a contextually shaped community based model;

Successes and challenges providing responsive OT assessment and meaningful interventions.

Stages of community rebuilding, support and sustainability will be included.

Conclusion and Implications for Practice:

Understanding the realities of torture and its effects will aid occupational therapists to develop safe contextually relevant interventions. Pairing this understanding with the professions existing skills can promote co-creation of positive experiences with survivors which can essentially be transforming, not only for survivors, but for practitioners as well.