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Mental health and community participation

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Title: Mental health and community participation

Introduction:

How do people with mental health issues living in the community describe their community participation? Using photovoice research methodology (photographs/narratives), participants communicated their experience of community participation within an urban environment. The results inform OT community mental health practice to support community participation. This study fits the conference themes of Rights and Disability due to its focus on how poverty and stigma limit community participation and Public Policy as the need for timely resources to prevent homelessness is illuminated via the study results. This study fits with the theme of Experience, Subjectivity and Everyday, through the perceptions and lived experiences of the multicultural participants with mental health issues living in the community.

Objectives:

1. How do people with mental health issues describe their access to and participation within community?
2. Which aspects of the environment foster or hinder community participation?
3. How can occupational therapists support community participation?

Methods:

Using photovoice methodology, participants answered community participation research questions through photographs and descriptions to communicate their lived experience. The results of this action research study will be shared with legislative leaders and health care providers through a photo exhibit at San José Public Library in California, USA to influence policy, and the provision of services and resources.

Results:

Major themes that influence community participation for people with mental health issues were identified:

1. Access to transportation, and support from friends, family and providers facilitate participation.
2. Misperceptions about people with mental health issues, managing symptoms, and limited resources are barriers to participation.

Conclusions/Contributions to the practice of OT:

OTs can promote community participation by helping people with mental health issues to develop friendships and supportive networks, which in turn support community participation. OTs may also act as political advocates for increased resources and greater understanding of mental health to support community participation.

Keywords: Rights and disability, public policy, experience, subjectivity, and everyday

Scope: Mental health

Age group: Adults

Presentation type: Poster