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The Community-Based Gerontology Component of the NAPA-OT Field School in Antigua, Guatemala

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Introduction: U.S. colleagues in occupational science/occupational therapy, medical anthropology, and disability studies developed a six-week field school to enable faculty and students to refine the interplay of disciplines in collaborative research and occupational therapy practice within Guatemalan culture. Theories of social and occupational justice within a life course perspective direct and integrate the three components of the field school: Neonatal Assessment and Early Child Development, Disability Studies, and Community-Based Gerontology. The poster will focus on the gerontology component. **Objectives:** We describe the curriculum of this innovative interdisciplinary, international field school. **Description:** The 2009 gerontology curriculum to be described will have occurred by the time of the conference. In 2009 Community-Based Gerontology, directed by a medical anthropologist and an occupational therapist, includes one anthropology doctoral student and five occupational therapy Master's students. Students will take daily Spanish classes and participate in both research and practice with Guatemalan older adults. Their work, based primarily in a 70-bed residential care facility for frail aged, entails intensive data collection employing anthropological techniques (i.e., field observations, in-depth interviews, life histories, and needs-assessment surveys) to identify social groups, everyday activities and routines, resources, and perceived needs of residents and staff. This data will inform collaborations of students and faculty with facility staff in developing site-appropriate programs. Students also accompany local social workers on home visits to households of older adults to develop an understanding of elders' roles within Guatemalan families. **Discussion:** Weekly seminars with the entire field school faculty, student body, and visiting Guatemalan scholars will allow students to discuss their ongoing work using theories of social and occupational justice within a life course perspective. **Conclusion:** The combination of research and practice immersed in the daily lives of Guatemalan older adults and informed by practicing scholars in occupational science, occupational therapy, disability studies, and anthropology will provide a rare opportunity to advance interdisciplinary theory and practice within a multi-cultural setting. **Contribution to practice:** The hands-on interplay among disciplines should contribute to the expansion and enhancement of the field, with more nuanced perspectives on the political practice of occupational therapy.