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Intercultural perspectives of therapeutic interactions, interventions and cultural expressions

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I. Introduction

After completing my Occupational Therapy degree from the University of Florida in December 2008, I set out looking for an adventure and an opportunity to expand my cultural awareness with regards to the practice of OT in other countries. Thanks to the assistance and willingness of an OT professional in Chile, I was able to participate in an observational OT experience in Santiago. By sharing intercultural experiences including OT approaches, interventions and interactions among cultures, we contribute to the growth of the OT profession globally and to the creation of innovative OT approaches.

II. Objectives

The purpose of this presentation is to share an intercultural experience in order to stimulate a dialogue with regards to similarities and differences between therapeutic interactions and interventions in other cultures.

III. Description

The volunteering experience consisted of 40 hrs of observation of OT interventions including ADL's, IADL's, splinting, therapeutic activities and cognitive retraining in an inpatient/outpatient rehab setting with an adult population. The following diagnoses were prevalent in this population: spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, stroke and upper extremity injuries. Additionally, the experienced allowed for participation in interdisciplinary weekly meetings and OT departmental meeting.

IV. Discussion

Upon careful analysis of observations during my stay in Chile, the following approaches were noted as efficient and effective in enhancing the Occupational Therapy process, professional interactions and work environment.

- (a) Holistic approach with use of research based techniques as well as the inclusion of interventions such as arts, crafts and relaxation workshops
- (b) Culturally appropriate physical affection used as a means of therapeutic use of self
- (c) Mindful, efficient and creative use of resources
- (d) Family atmosphere with an emphasis on building strong relationships with your co-workers allowing for increased communication among the interdisciplinary team

V. Contribution to the practice of Occupational Therapy

The stimulation of dialogues with regards to similarities and differences between therapeutic interactions and interventions in different cultures allows for promoting new ideas and innovative approaches that benefit the Occupational Therapy profession as a whole.

