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Occupational focus on human displacement: working with displaced persons and refugees

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This workshop addresses the roles of occupational therapists in working with persons displaced by natural disaster, war or conflict. People engage in vigorous occupational adaptation to survive, and strive for a future beyond displacement. Yet displacement can be prolonged by socially and politically constructed barriers to full and fair occupational participation (WFOT, 2014) and the socio-political context of displacement must be addressed at national and international levels. Responding to the occupational needs of displaced persons demands occupational therapy core skills, but access to occupational therapy input is new within disaster, conflict, camp, urban and settlement contexts.

Occupational therapists work with people to rebuild their capacity, roles, routines and self-efficacy; to address occupational imbalance, deprivation, and adaptation requirements; and to develop strong social networks through community-based programs that are strength-based, client-centered and context specific.

The workshop incorporates international resources which support national and local action.

Learning Objectives:

1. Recognize the changing needs of displaced persons over different stages of displacement
2. Understand how to work within systems at international, national and local levels
3. Apply occupational perspectives to support displaced persons in rebuilding their capacity, roles, routines and self-efficacy
4. Reflect on ways to support pioneers to build capacity in this field of practice.

Maximum number of participants: 80

Teaching methods:

Through guided discussion, evidence based resources, and reflection on case studies, participants will explore the various roles and strategies to support displaced persons including those marginalized by gender, poverty and disability.