

Exploring the graduate competencies required for Primary Health Care practice :a KwaZulu-Natal perspective

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Background: National health insurance requires occupational therapists to provide a good primary health care (PHC) service in the public sector.

Objectives of Study: We aimed to identify the key competencies required for occupational therapists to deliver a PHC service in a peri-urban or rural area.

Methods: An explorative multiple method, qualitative research study was used to identify the graduate competencies using department of health (DoH) stakeholders' perspectives and relevant guiding documents. 14 established therapists and thirty-nine University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) novice OT graduates were purposively sampled for the study. The DOH management key informants (n=5) included managers in PHC and rehabilitation. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, focus group and a document review of UKZN curriculum and local and global regulatory documents. A framework was created, using the seven roles from the UKZN competency framework, to deductively analyze the data. Trustworthiness was ensured through using multiple sources of data. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Biomedical research ethics committee.

Findings: The health practitioner, communicator, collaborator, manager and advocate roles were outlined. Competencies included understanding the impact of DOH health policies and social determinants of health on occupation and the client's health. Culturally sensitive communication, negotiating shared goals with stakeholders and managing a department were essential. Graduates needed to be socially accountable, develop services and be advocates for clients.

Conclusion: The study offered insights into the essential graduate competencies identified by stakeholders and recommended measures for preparing rehabilitation graduates for PHC service delivery.