

Disability and rehabilitation services in post-revolutionary Libya: challenges and opportunities for occupational therapy

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Introduction: Very little information is available about disability and rehabilitation services in the Middle East and North Africa region. The dearth of information has been confirmed by international peak agencies such as the World Bank and United Nations. The lack of scholarship and data regarding people with disability and services for them impedes informed policy and service development.

Objectives: To explore published literature relating to services for people with disability in Libya and to conduct a field investigation on services available following the 2011 revolution. Method: Scoping review of literature published in English and Arabic; field study of the only functioning disability and rehabilitation service in Lybia in 2012.

Results: There is very little information available about people with disability or the function and impact of disability and rehabilitation services in post-revolutionary Libya. The lack of information has become more acute with the ongoing conflict. The case study of the Benghazi Rehabilitation and Handicap centre, the only functioning service available, revealed operational strengths, weaknesses and opportunities including: staff training, strategies to manage bed block, equipment and resource management and use of policy approaches to disability and rehabilitation that support social models of disability and a development of community based rehabilitation.

Conclusion: Occupational therapists are well placed to assist in policy and service planning and implementation in a post-conflict Libya where every citizen will have the opportunity to contribute.