

Should I stay or should I go? An exploration of factors influencing retention of occupational therapists working in mental health services in Aotearoa/ New Zealand

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Introduction/Rationale: Retention of occupational therapists in mental health services are of concern to management of health services, the employee themselves and to consumers for continuity of supports and working towards their own recovery. An occupational therapist's decisions about leaving, staying or applying for another position are multi-faceted and have professional, personal and service implications.

Objectives: Explore the factors that influence a person's past, present and future decisions about positions in mental health and occupational therapy. Do New Zealand occupational therapists working in mental health identify similar or different factors compared to overseas research on the issue of retention in relation to occupational therapists who work in mental health?

Method: A quantitative, descriptive, cross-sectional online survey design enabled greater geographical distribution and increased participation by therapists about their intentions.

Results: Two hundred and thirty four participants took part in the New Zealand wide survey, approximately 68% of the mental health occupational therapists holding an Annual Practicing Certificate with Occupational Therapy Board New Zealand in 2016/17.

An analysis of the data will be offered in this presentation along with discussion and comparison to overseas data from past retention studies. Key factors have been linked to participant's job satisfaction, years in position, role, tasks, professional conceptual understanding, and identity were examined.

Conclusion: The factors influencing retention of occupational therapists working in mental health and consumer implications will be reviewed. Recommendations for current and future practice and managing practitioners will be made.