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## **The contribution of Occupational Therapy to the training of Community Health Workers**

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**Introduction:** Primary Health Care (PHC) re-engineering in South Africa includes establishing PHC teams to improve people's health and well-being. These teams, also called ward-based outreach teams (WBOTs), consist of community health workers (CHWs) who deliver integrated primary care in defined areas. The need to train CHWs adequately to perform health promotion, disease prevention and management in households has been recognised and various training programmes exist.

**Rationale:** Occupational Therapy (OT) aims to achieve health, well-being and participation in life through engagement in occupation. Occupational therapists (OTs) can thus contribute meaningfully to training CHWs.

**Objectives:** To explore the possible contribution of OT to CHW training.

**Method:** As part of a larger PhD study evaluating CHW training, qualitative methods were used to gain insights into possible contributions of OT to CHW training. These include analysis of the researcher's reflections while training 35 CHWs in the City of Tshwane over a four-year period and analysis of the curriculum used. Discussions with community-based OTs and scoping of literature further informed the research.

**Results:** OT philosophy, theory and approaches are very relevant within community-oriented primary care. OTs can and should contribute significantly regarding issues such as the understanding, identification, and management of mental health, disability and chronic conditions within the context of poverty and limited resources.

**Conclusion:** OTs are well-equipped to understand the complex relationships between people's occupations, their environment and their health. OTs trained in community engagement and working in communities have a worthwhile and pertinent contribution to make to the training of CHWs.