

Establishing Occupational Therapy Training in Ethiopia: The University of Gondar / Queen's University Partnership

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Introduction/Rationale: Global estimates indicate that 17.6 million people may be affected by disability in Ethiopia. The 2007 national census found that 85% of the population resides in underserved, rural areas, with limited to no access to necessary health, rehabilitation, or social services. Currently, there is no occupational therapy (OT) education in Ethiopia, and there is evidence of only one actively practicing occupational therapist present in the country.

Objective: To profile the partnership between a Canadian and Ethiopian university establishing an undergraduate OT program at University of Gondar (UoG) in Ethiopia to be submitted for WFOT recognition.

Approach: Using a unique cross-institutional capacity building approach, faculty members at the UoG will receive MScOT degrees at Queen's University in Canada. Faculty members at both universities will co-develop and initially co-teach a customized 4-year undergraduate curriculum after conducting stakeholders' sensitization; need assessment and benchmarking of OT programs in other African settings. National curriculum evaluation and accreditation processes will be done before officially launching the new program.

Practice Implications: This presentation will (a) provide information about how theory and evidence are being used to develop the new program; (b) identify pedagogical principles that are being applied and evaluated; and (c) support understanding of the application of OT in Ethiopia and other low- and middle-income countries.

Conclusion: There is a great need for OT professionals to improve the participation and quality of life of people with disabilities in resource-limited contexts. We hope that this presentation will provide principles and processes for similar educational development efforts.