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The Power & the Glory? Exploring how Occupational Therapists address the spirituality of children with physical disabilities

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Within the United Kingdom the statutory services' policy emphasis on daily activity and the requirement for equipment provision to enable function appears to be leading the focus of discussions between Occupational Therapists, Children and Parents away from the holistic exploration of the child's sense of self, their occupational balance and their ambitions for the future. This led to a personal questioning of current Occupational Therapy practice culminating in the decision to conduct a PhD to explore this area further.

- To determine how OTs are currently addressing the spirituality of children with physical disabilities.
- To determine the extent to which OTs working with children with physical disabilities feel that spirituality should or should not be a part of their professional practice.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was used to interpret the attitudes & perceptions of clinicians and academics with experience of working with children with physical disabilities regarding spirituality. A mix of creative workshops and individual interviews, along with reflexivity, was used to collect data which were analysed inductively.

This presentation will discuss the findings of the research so far. In particular, the findings currently reveal a potentially tokenistic view of spirituality that, instead of being child centred and holistic, is in danger of generating a power imbalance between the therapist and child.

This aspect will be explored further in relation to the potential for occupational deprivation for children and the collective impact Occupational Therapists may generate by further developing their understanding of the spiritual aspect of our philosophy and practice.