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The Ice-breaking Stage of Oncology Occupational Therapy in Taiwan

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Introduction: According to the report of Bureau of Health Promotion in Taiwan, one of four men and one of five women in population get cancer every year. In spite of 5-year relative survival rates could achieve average 48.26% in all cancer, cancer and the treatment may result in disabilities such as pain, fatigue, deconditioning, or decreased mobility, and decrement in quality of life. 60% of cancer survivors need one or more services, however, 40% of cancer survivor could not access appropriate service. Few cancer rehabilitation courses were designed in entry-level occupational therapy program in Taiwan. It is important to build the knowledge and skill ability for practitioners who are willing to provide service in cancer rehabilitation.

Objectives: The objectives of this study were: 1. To understand barriers which hold back occupational therapists to provide their service. 2. To figure out some strategies for clinical practioners to overcome these barriers.

Method: Questionnaire survey and focus group were used in this study. The respondent rate of questionnaire is 74.56%(85/114). The data of focus groups were recorded and analyzed from verbatim.

Results: The result of this study demonstrated four barriers for occupational therapist: knowledge, self-confidence, health insurance system, man power, support from team members and policy. Some strategies were proposed in focus groups, such as school education, in-service training, and interdisciplinary team.

Conclusion: Cancer care is an emerging niche for occupational therapy. Occupational therapy is a profession which could provide continuum care for cancer survivors from prevention to palliative care.