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The use of appreciative inquiry with mental health consumers – towards responsive occupational therapy programs

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Introduction: Common ways of planning and evaluating occupational therapy services include the clinical judgement of therapists and cause-effect interpretation of statistics. Patient-informed methods of planning occupational therapy services are yet to be explored within occupational therapy, and more specifically within the provision of in- and outpatient mental health services in South Africa.

Objectives: The aim of this study was to explore the perspectives of outpatient mental health consumers on the successful elements contained in an Occupational Therapy outpatient craft group.

Method: The 4-D model of appreciative inquiry was used. Six outpatients were selected via convenience sampling. Five data collection sessions of 90 minutes each were conducted. Inductive reasoning was used.

Results: Participants identified elements enabling meaningful participation, and challenges, limitations and achievements caused by their mental health conditions were discussed.

Conclusion: Appreciative inquiry is a valuable method for exploring patient views of useful aspects of occupational therapy outpatient art groups.