

## **Through the eyes of an Occupational Therapist: The pathway to recovery from a burn injury**

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Burns injuries in South Africa is a common occurrence especially affecting lower-socioeconomic communities and children. A large number of South Africans live in shacks (temporary housing) in informal settlements where fires can spread unabated as a result of overcrowding, flammable building materials and unsafe structures.

Treating burn victims is a challenge but a priority at Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital , the only dedicated pediatric burns unit in sub-Saharan Africa. We treat approximately 1400 in-patients per year and another 4500 out-patients contact per year. 600 -1000 of these children require surgical intervention.

The burns injuries most commonly seen in the unit are hot water burns (76 %), Flame burns and to lesser electrical burns and chemical burns. Burn cases are often devastating and expanse of burns we treat has significant physical and emotional debilitating consequences on the individual and family.

This presentation strives to position and confirm the role of occupational therapy, from the acute tertiary institution, through the different stages of recovery, as essential part of the occupational well-being of the carer and developing child. Furthermore families, homes, livelihoods and communities are destroyed. Therefore treatment extends beyond physical deficits and the multi-disciplinary team approach focuses on the physical, emotional and psychological impact on the survivor as well as community they return to.

We are proud of the work of the role and value that occupational therapy plays in the rehabilitation of burn victims in South Africa. It is essential to regaining quality of life and reintegrating into society.