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A Qualitative Study of How African Occupational Therapists Perceive, Describe and Experience Effective and Sustainable Global Partnerships

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Introduction: WFOT and American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) are committed to promote a globally connected profession, responsive to the priorities and interests of diverse societies (WFOT, 2011; AOTA, 2007). However, few studies have examined perspectives of African OTs on how they perceive and experience global partnerships.

Objectives: The purpose of this study is to

1. Explore lived experiences of African OTs in relation to global partnerships
2. Explore their perspectives on effective strategies to develop global partnerships.
3. Uncover challenges African OTs face when engaged in global partnerships

Method: This qualitative research design combines an on-line questionnaire with focus group strategies (Given, 2008). Questionnaires created some efficiency and allowed for a standardized approach to collecting broad information from a geographically scattered group of OTs practicing in widely diverse settings (Marsden & Wright, 2010). Focus group interviews allowed the researchers to orchestrate interactions between practitioners to generate rich and detailed data (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

Results: Preliminary data defines four major challenges to effective partnerships: 1) limited financial resources to support visiting therapists, 2) lack of time to organize guest visits with patients and community organizations, 3) wide geographical area and limited OT influence on patients visited in the community and 4) visiting therapists assume they hold answers for local therapists' problems which are often grounded in Western models of practice.

Conclusion: Findings of this study reveal global north OTs have much to learn from their African colleagues about appropriate and culturally competent ways to engage in effective, sustainable global partnerships.