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Occupational Therapists and the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO)

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Introduction: The ISCO is published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to provide a framework for international reporting and exchange of statistical data on occupations. The ISCO also serves as a model for the development of regional/national occupational classifications. However, some countries without the capacity to develop their own classifications rely solely upon the use of the ISCO. Unlike peer professions, occupational therapists are not uniquely described as a professional group in the ISCO, but instead listed within the category "other health professions not elsewhere described." According to ILO, there was no demand from member countries for a unique definition of occupational therapists.

Objective: The presentation will discuss advocacy efforts for a separate categorization of occupational therapists in the ISCO.

Approach: A survey of WFOT member organizations indicated a low awareness of the categorization status of occupational therapists in the occupational classification system used within their jurisdiction. Using survey results, an advocacy toolkit was developed for member organizations to lobby for a unique ISCO category for occupational therapists.

Practice Implications: The ISCO restricts information gathering and comparison regarding the occupational therapy profession domestically and internationally. Without occupationally specific information, occupational therapists are severely disadvantaged and lack influence to drive important decisions concerning health human resources and service delivery regarding occupational therapy.

Conclusion: The ISCO has important implications for the development of the profession and ultimately, the accessibility of occupational therapy services. International lobby efforts are integral to the creation of a unique definition of occupational therapists in the ISCO.