



Welcome to the first issue of *Spotlight on Occupation*

We know how difficult it is to stay up to date with research findings and knowledge development.

Spotlight on Occupation brings research evidence and its practice implications within easy reach. The reviews of occupational science, occupational therapy and occupation focused practice articles promote the day to day application of knowledge generated in New Zealand and overseas.

As the title suggests, the glue that holds all of the newsletter items together is the growing understanding of humans as occupational beings and the complexities and meanings of the occupations themselves. By 'occupation' we mean the everyday things people of all ages do to occupy their time. The diversity of topics across this and future issues aims to appeal to different people; health and rehabilitation practitioners, service managers, community developers, policy makers or anyone whose practice is concerned with promoting people's participation in the home and community.

Spotlight on Occupation also profiles opportunities for postgraduate education at AUT University, enabling those who want to be part of the knowledge wave to stay abreast of developments. We'll occasionally feature publications by AUT lecturers and students, so that you can join us in celebrating the contribution New Zealanders are making to occupational science and occupationally focused practice.



EDITORS CLARE HOCKING, LOIS DENHAM, JENNI MACE AND VALERIE WRIGHT-ST CLAIR (L-R)

IN THIS ISSUE:

- USING FUNCTIONAL CAPACITY ASSESSMENTS
- REHABILITATION OF PEOPLE WITH DYSPRAXIA
- OCCUPATIONS IN MENTAL HEALTH RECOVERY
- STUDYING OCCUPATION

Health Professionals' Perceptions and Practices in Relation to Functional Capacity Evaluations: Results of a Quantitative Survey

AUTHORS: James, C., Mackenzie, L.

SUMMARY: Evaluating employees' functional abilities or limitations is central to occupational rehabilitation practice. This Australian study surveyed 77 practitioners from accredited rehabilitation providers, occupational therapists (n=63), physiotherapists (n=10) and exercise physiologists (n=4), about their use of functional capacity evaluations (FCE). The 3 most popular standardised assessments were the Workhab, Valpar and Isernhagen. While 91% of practitioners used standardised FCEs, mostly they used non-standardised assessments. Almost all (n=60) said they always or often used only parts of standardised and non-standardised assessments. While being accredited and trained to use FCEs were rated highly, practitioners were less concerned about a test's reliability and validity.

COMMENT: These results need to be interpreted cautiously as only 30% of potential respondents returned the survey. Response patterns suggest standardised assessment protocols are abandoned in favour of adapting an FCE to better match the individual needs and occupational setting. However, using a reliable and valid, structured FCE and following implementation protocols will strengthen confidence in assessment findings and provide sound justification for clinical decisions in this era of evidence based practice.

Reference: (2009) *Journal Of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 19(2), 203-211.

Rehabilitation of people with dyspraxia: Health professionals learning from patients

AUTHORS: Blijlevens, H., Hocking, C., & Paddy, A.

SUMMARY: This small scale phenomenological study explored the lived experience of people with dyspraxia after a stroke. The main finding is that people with dyspraxia struggle with every aspect of their lives. Importantly, the participants' stories revealed the extent to which they struggled with the most mundane everyday activities; something not conveyed in any of the formal definitions of dyspraxia.

COMMENT: This study reinforces the importance of health professionals diagnosing dyspraxia. It also supports the suggestion that with time people learn to compensate for their impairment, and that health professionals have the potential to learn from people with dyspraxia and their families. For health professionals, this means that we need to understand what people with dyspraxia experience, supporting their hopefulness for recovery and building up knowledge of the functional and compensatory strategies people devise to cope with everyday activities.

Reference: (2009). *Disability and Rehabilitation*, 31(6), 466-475.



HELEEN BLIJLEVENS

SPOTLIGHT ON OCCUPATION



Recovery as the re-fabrication of everyday life: Exploring the meaning of occupation for people recovering from mental illness

AUTHOR: Sutton, D.

SUMMARY: This phenomenological inquiry explored the meaning of day-to-day occupation for people recovering from mental illness.

Everyday routine activity was found to be an important medium for change as well as an outcome of recovery itself. A continuum of engagement including the states of 'un-doing', 'non-doing', 'half-doing', 'engaged-doing' and 'absorbed-doing' is described. The study highlights the dynamics at play in each of these modes of occupation and the way in which carers can influence the experience and meaning of doing to support recovery.

COMMENT: Understanding clients' lived experience is at the heart of occupationally-based practice. To work effectively with the dynamics of occupation, therapists need to attune themselves to the kind of 'lived space' the person is in and the ways that different states of engagement can be interpreted. Through different modes of occupation, people in recovery can reconnect with what they care about most, their bodies and the immediate environment as well as the wider social environment and their own unique way of being in the world. It is critical for therapists and carers to avoid making assumptions about the meaning of particular states of occupation.

Reference: (2008). Unpublished Doctoral Thesis. AUT University. <http://hdl.handle.net/10292/662>



DANIEL SUTTON

New Zealand Studies of Enabling Occupation

RESEARCHERS: Clare Hocking and Kirk Reed, Ellen Nicholson

SUMMARY: Following the lead of a group of Australian occupational therapists (Gail Whiteford, Clare Wilding, Michael Curtin), two projects investigating how occupational therapists enable occupation in New Zealand are about to kick off. Both studies follow a similar format. Occupational therapists join the study and work together to read the new *Enabling Occupation** book, apply the ideas in practice, and discuss what they find.

Clare and Kirk will be looking for occupational therapy supervisors and team leaders from all over the country. Their meetings will be by teleconference. Ellen will be putting out the call for Auckland-based therapists who work with children and their families and can come together for a monthly meeting.

Both studies address a different question, but the central idea is to see what happens when a group of occupational therapists get together to talk about ideas like occupationally focused practice, occupational justice and the skills we use to enable occupation. While the studies are initiated within AUT, everyone involved will be part of identifying the issues and generating the practices that make occupation part of our thinking and visible in practice.

We might also have ideas about how well the concepts in the book work in the New Zealand context, and other things the authors need to consider in the next revision.

CONTACTS: We're still thinking, talking and getting ethics approval, but if you're keen to be involved, let us know. You can do that via Clare's email address: clare.hocking@aut.ac.nz

Reference: Townsend, E. A., & Polatajko, H. J. (2007). **Enabling occupation II: Advancing an occupational therapy vision for health, well-being & justice through occupation*. Ottawa: Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, ACE.

Studying Occupation

LECTURER: Clare Hocking

OUTLINE: AUT offers two papers focusing on occupation. **Participation and Health:** students explore an aspect of occupation and its relationship with health, such as cultural perspectives, how people organise the things they do, the meanings occupation holds. Previous students have investigated why women work, how occupation relates to identity, risk occupations such as tagging or skate boarding, and how spirituality is expressed through occupation.

Enabling Participation: uses Townsend and Polatajko's (2007) *Enabling Occupation II* text to design a process for a client, group, organisation or community. This is a chance to get up to date with the latest thinking about current practice or to build the foundations for future practice. Both papers are multidisciplinary, and students enjoy hearing how others apply the same ideas in different contexts. There are NO exams, and LOTS of support to ease practitioners back into studying.

QUALIFICATION: These papers can be a stand-alone qualification (Certificate of Proficiency); be built into an Honours degree; be credited towards a Postgraduate Certificate or Postgraduate Diploma of Health Science (Occupational Practice); or a Masters degree.

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