

Guest Editor's Preface to the Special Issue on the Contribution of Occupational Therapy to Health

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The World Health Organization (W.H.O., 2001) states that health is a dynamic interactive process between the person and the environment, and is determined by the individual's ability to participate in purposeful and meaningful activities of his/her daily life. Therefore, the modern approach of the term 'health' refers to a multidimensional phenomenon with bio-psychosocial, spiritual, environmental and cultural dimensions (Darviri, 2007; Pender, 1996). The individual maintains his/her health by performing occupations. Occupation is a complex process that refers to everyday and familiar things that people do in their daily lives (A.O.T.A., 1995). Through occupations individuals fulfil their needs as they interact with their environment and promote their cognitive, sensorimotor and psychosocial development (Law & al., 1997; Wilcock, 2006).

Another definition of occupation is the following: "Occupation gives meaning to life is an important determinant of health and prosperity, organizes behaviour, develops and changes throughout life, influenced and is influenced by the environment and most importantly it generates therapeutic results" (Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, 1997). It is a subjective experience that takes place in specific spatiotemporal conditions and socio-cultural environment (Pierce, 2001). Occupational therapists appreciate that health is promoted and maintained when individuals are able to perform the required or needed occupation (A.O.T.A., 2008). Therefore, in order to promote occupational performance and occupational justice (Townsend, 2003), they focus on all the possible factors that determine the participation of the individual in home, school, and community (Wilcock & Townsend, 2008; W.H.O., 2001).

The articles of this special issue are closely related to health issues. The first article refers to driving ability of persons with mild cognitive impairment. In everyday clinical practice occupational therapists often discuss with patients with Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) about safe driving. They also try to determine the ability of a person with Cognitive Impairment to drive. Several methods have been used to determine a person's ability to drive: neuropsychological scales, driving simulators and evaluation under real driving conditions (on - road testing).

Presently, there are very few low-cost, face-valid, off-road assessment batteries available. The Occupational Therapy-Driver Off Road Assessment (OT-DORA) Battery and The Occupational Therapy Home Maze Test (OT-DHMT) which is part of the OT-DORA Battery are used in licensing recommendations for older and/or functionally impaired drivers.

Specialist Occupational Therapy Driver Assessors and driver licensing authorities require on-road assessment procedures that are both valid and reliable. Assessment validity may be influenced by both test route characteristics and driver characteristics. The existing international guidelines, which recommend that specialised on-road testing is needed when driving safety is doubtful for patients with MCI, highlight the importance of assessing executive dysfunction and caregiver concern about driving.

The second article investigates the everyday play occupational engagement of parents with their child, in their natural home setting. Using an occupational science's perspective, parental play engagement was approached as an occupational experience that continuously unfolds in the life of a parent through his/her daily co-occupational play transactions with his/her child. A qualitative research design was used to explore and reveal the observable and phenomenological aspects of parental play occupational engagement. The results of this study disclose information regarding the ways parents orchestrate their everyday parent-child play interactions, the play behaviours that parents exhibit during the co-occupation of parent-child play, the parental contribution to the creation of the home-play environment and the parental play perspectives. The emerged knowledge on parental play is thought to provide occupational therapists' reasoning with valuable information to use in their family-centered play-based area of practice. Additionally, the adoption of an occupational science's perspective contributes to interdisciplinary play literature with an approach that does not view parental play secondary to child's play but as a significant daily experience of parenting.

The third article explores job satisfaction issues of Occupational Therapists in Greece. Job satisfaction is a complex and multifaceted concept which has different meanings to different people. It is considered more as an attitude or an internal state.

Research into job satisfaction in the occupational therapy field has been conducted in many countries, including Australia, United Kingdom (UK), Europe, Canada and United States of America (USA). These studies have investigated job satisfaction among occupational therapists from different perspectives: managerial leadership, time allocation patterns, perceived autonomy, work incentives and disincentives, reasons for attrition, occupational therapy faculty's teaching roles, work-related stress, mental and physical health, sickness absence, level of flow, work tasks, gender issues, staff rotation, recruitment and retention strategies, effects of NHS reforms, and mental health settings.

The results of the studies have indicated that the work itself, the relation with co-workers, managerial leadership, and personal achievement, autonomy and recognition positively affected staff's job satisfaction. Working conditions, bureaucracy, low salary, limited promotional opportunities, depression with the chronicity and severity of the client's illnesses, lack of respect by other professionals, role ambiguity, child rearing, and lack of in-service training and continuing education have influenced negatively the levels of occupational therapists' job satisfaction.

There is no information regarding research on job satisfaction in occupational therapy field in Greece. There are only a limited number of studies on job satisfaction concerning medical personnel, educators and nurses. The present study is a survey that investigated the relationships between facets of job satisfaction and overall job satisfaction in Occupational Therapy. Relationships between demographic characteristics, facets of job satisfaction and overall job satisfaction were also explored.

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