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## Defining occupation: a global perspective.

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### Introduction

There has been renewed interest in exploring and defining occupation in recent years, prompted by the advent of occupational science and the reclaiming of occupation as the foundation construct of occupational therapy, (Wilcock 2006; Molineux 2004; Christiansen and Townsend 2004). However, although academics have written much about occupation, it is questionable to what extent this thinking has transferred into practice settings.

### Objective

The aim of this study was to explore the concept of occupation and illustrate how the term was understood and applied by practising occupational therapists around the world.

### Methods

An international purposive sample of six experienced occupational therapists was selected from personal contacts. A UK university ethics committee gave approval for the study to proceed. As the sample was geographically dispersed, semi-structured e-mail interviews were carried out. This developing methodology has been reported as convenient, inexpensive and generating high quality data (Meho 2006), and in this case also allowed access to culturally rich information. The data was analyzed using interpretive phenomenological analysis.

### Results

The findings showed that occupational therapists recognized and valued the central role of occupation in their practice. However, they defined occupation in a way that reflected the constraints of their work setting, and there were some conflicts between aspirations and the reality of practice. Cultural nuances were also evident in their narratives of how occupation was enacted.

### Conclusion and contribution to the evidence base.

This study has added to the evidence base of occupational therapy by clearly illustrating the applied understanding of occupation in various cultures. Furthermore, e-mail interviewing proved to be a useful methodology to explore global occupational therapy practice

### References

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