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Measuring and Making Sense of Elders' Participation in Occupations

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Introduction

Practice in the context of population ageing calls for understanding elders' occupational engagement and opening up occupational possibilities, enabling the long-lived to enjoy rich, engaged lives.

Previous studies suggest elders' activity participation is associated with ageing well and a lowered risk of mortality. However, there is little agreement in how occupations are explored, measured and categorised.

Objectives

This poster overviews the ways older peoples' everyday occupations are explored, measured and categorised and draws the reader to consider what is revealed and concealed in the process.

Description

A literature review of how occupations are described, measured and analysed in studies was conducted. It revealed a complex, mix of theoretical underpinnings, research and analytic methods and instruments used.

Results/Discussion

Elders' engagement in everyday occupations is done on the basis of the type of occupation (Glass et al., 1999; Menec, 2003), the nature of participation [ICF] (Lomax, Brown, & Howard, 2004); the nature of the person's interest (Hagglom-Kronlof & Sonn, 2005); the nature of time use (Moss & Lawton, 1982), the nature of the experience (Jonsson, 2008); activity patterns and context (Droogleeveer Fortuijn et al., 2006); and empirically generated categories (Ellegard, 2006).

Conclusion

The diversity in ways of exploring, measuring and categorising everyday occupations across studies means the power of theorising and conceptualising is lost and it offers few opportunities for comparative studies between communities and countries. On the other hand, attempts at standardising the ways in which occupations are measured and interpreted runs the risk of covering over "the complexity and 'delicate layerings' of everyday occupations" (Hasselkus, 2006, p. 627).

Contribution to the practice/evidence base of occupational therapy

Occupational scientists and therapists are challenged to lay claim to this conceptual ground for the purpose of informing research and practice.