

Overcoming obstacles to
occupational therapy service
delivery in developing
communities: Cultural
considerations and case
examples.

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Case example 1

- Formal qualitative study of an American occupational therapist in Dominican Republic
- What was the experience of an American OT working to establish an OT service in Dominican Republic?

Dominican Republic



Source: Raul Touzon, National Geographic. 2006

Case example 2

- Supervision of Australian Occupational Therapy students in Solomon Islands
- Informal information gathering—emails, conversation, written reports.



Solomon Islands



Source: Personal photo of OT student

Country comparisons

Australia	USA	Dominican Republic	Solomon Islands
20 million	290 million	9 million	0.5 million
US\$26,900	US\$36,300	US\$6,300	US\$1,700
80 yrs	77 yrs	69 yrs	71 yrs
100%	97%	85%	62%

Source: National Geographic,
2006

Case scenarios

1 2

Graduate	Students
Contracted and paid by local authorities	Aid agencies/ Personal contacts
IBR model	IBR & CBR
Existing PT	Existing PT
4 months & Spanish sp.	1 meeting with SI



Source: OT student

Three main themes

1. Challenges of life in a community developing human services
2. Local workers: Work skills and professional behaviour
3. Behaviour and expectations of clients attending therapy

Challenges of life in a community developing human services

Case 1

- Managing without material resources
- Environmental challenges
- Delayed start to rehabilitation

Case 2

- Improvising/problem solving resources
- Environmental challenges
- Preventable debilitating conditions

Local workers: Work skills and professional behaviour

Case 1

- Educating the local workers
- Professional behaviours of local workers

Case 2

- Local workers lacked skills
- Local workers needed training

Behaviour and expectations of clients attending therapy

Case 1

- Social behaviours
- Family care reducing the need for independent functioning
- Perceptions of the therapist and therapy
- Attitudes to disability

Case 2

- Social behaviours
- Family interdependence
- Perceptions of OT
- Expectations and attitudes towards people with disabilities

Successful endeavors

Case 1

- Educating local workers and implement change
- Provide therapy and empower people with disabilities
- Provision of equipment
- Set up department

Case 2

- Educating/being educated by local workers
- Provide therapy and accommodate interventions
- Funding for equipment
- Lead to 3 positions in AOT newsletter

Challenges related to differences between OT and clients

- **Beliefs**-meaning of disability; effect of disability on roles and occupations; kinfolk structure; purpose of therapy; life is difficult.
- **Values**-family strength and unity; friendship and humour; personal causation; time and efficiency.

Core concepts within our profession that do not easily transcend cultural barriers

- Personal autonomy
- Performance and achievement in occupation
- Goal directed intervention



Source: Jody Cobb, National Geographic, 2006

Across cultures: Occupational preferences and tools do vary



Source: Maria Stetzel (Siberia) &
Bruce Dale (Mexico) NG 2006

Being an outsider



Source: James Davies, The Age,
04/07/06

Actions that are required by the OT profession

- Beyond cultural competency
- Closer ties with anthropology, medical anthropology and studies of the meanings of disease and disability in other cultures
- Support students in remote placements
 - student criteria
 - manuals and preparation exercises
 - often the first step in dev OT/disability services in general.

Actions...

- Build resources (OTION)
- Address issue of servicing clients with differing values and beliefs to those embedded in the OT profession
- Importance of supporting service development in all communities who request/offer collaboration
- Expand and update ethics

From the moment of birth

Every human being
wants happiness
and wants to avoid
suffering.

In this we are all the
same.

Dalai Lama



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References

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Learning can be painful in the beginning...



Oops!