

BOOK REVIEWS

Transformation Through Occupation

Edited by Ruth Watson and Leslie Swartz (published by Whurr, ISBN 1-86156-425-5)

The issues of culture and cross-culture practice, have been bandied about for quite some time now in occupational therapy and are often referred to, rather cursorily, in numerous books and articles. Finally we have a revelatory text book which tackles these in all their manifestations, complexities and challenges. Ostensibly about occupational therapy in South Africa, the book looks at the impact of poverty, women with disabilities, women and youth in the criminal justice system, children living with HIV/AIDS and youth at risk – areas which are rapidly gaining prominence in the Europe and in our country often in parallel with the issue of multiculturalism.

The book advocates a sort of new paradigm shift for occupational therapy – from the more familiar remedial or curative approach with individuals, to an outlook that is based on health promotion for communities and populations. The strongest argument that the book presents is that the majority of the world's population lives in developing countries,

where they very often experience deprivations brought about by poverty, displacement, violence, disease and discrimination and it is in this milieu that a dramatic contribution can be made to improve the health outlook. Occupational therapy's refocused emphasis on occupational engagement and occupational justice with communities, would be able to target these populations with the principal goal of enabling empowerment and self-advocacy. The book promotes the concept that occupational therapists should be committed to achieve optimal health rather than just maintain and restore health. This could be the result of pre-empting health problems through health-planning and health-promotion programmes as well as enabling people to come to realize their best choices.

Although the perspective of the book is South African, its significance to the rest of the world, including Malta, cannot be denied. Social and health matters being faced by clinicians are becoming more

complex and diversified reflecting a social structure which is becoming more multicultural but is also being transformed from the very grass roots by changing mores and social networks. These impinge on the more traditional problems tackled by occupational therapists creating new practice scenarios and challenging practitioners to cope with burgeoning areas of practice such as HIV/AIDS and rehabilitation within the criminal justice system.

If you are looking for a book that can demonstrate the range and potential of our profession, how it can bring about appreciable change in society and one that challenges established views and conventional wisdom on occupational therapy, then look no further – this is what you should read. *Transformation through Occupation* really makes for mind-broadening reading.

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