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The worldwide displacement crisis: What can occupational therapy do?

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INTRODUCTION: Worldwide, violence and oppression have forced millions of people from their homes, in unprecedented numbers. Serial traumas and losses, coupled with contextual and legal barriers, conspire to render occupational performance arduous, if not impossible. WFOT asserts that occupational therapists have a unique capacity to address the occupational consequences of displacement.

OBJECTIVES: Upon viewing this poster, participants will be able to:

1. Describe how the turmoil of forced displacement can impact healthy occupational engagement
2. Discuss how occupational therapists are uniquely suited to address the occupational challenges experienced by people who have survived displacement

APPROACH: The author synthesizes information from the literature, various stakeholders, and personal experience to highlight occupational injustices generated by forced displacement. A clear illustration of the interaction between person, environment, and occupation - as experienced in displacement – demonstrates areas of potential therapeutic impact. Occupational therapists are empowered to act.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS: Regardless of practice setting, or geographical location, occupational therapists are confronted with the cultural, social, and experiential challenges unique to the journey of forced displacement. Occupational injustices are evident at every turn. WFOT asserts that occupational therapists have a professional obligation to confront these challenges and promote healing among people who have experienced forced displacement.

CONCLUSION: In order to meet this mandate, it is incumbent upon the profession to become educated about the variables contributing to displacement, the challenges faced along the journey, and the occupational consequences.