

Listening to Voices from the National Listening & Dialogue Campaign in South Africa: Insights from a participatory event for Occupational Therapists in the Eastern Cape

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Introduction: In 2016, the Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA) embarked on a 'National Listening and Dialogue Campaign' (NLDC) to facilitate a clear vision and strategy for Occupational Therapy (OT) by 2020, the 75th year of OT in South Africa. The Eastern Cape (EC) branch hosted the NLDC for the Province in May 2017.

Objectives: To establish the vision of OT practitioners by identifying key themes that emerged from the provincial NLDC.

Approach: A participatory research approach was used to gather information from 75 Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapy Assistants who participated in the provincial NLDC. Ten Critical Conversations, aimed at identifying varied opinions, were facilitated. Views elicited were captured in writing. Data was collated and analysed by two OT's to identify emerging themes for the vision of OT in the Province.

Results: Several collective themes emerged including the need to deliver occupation-based programmes that are family- and community-centred; promotion of social inclusion for rural, poor and persons with disabilities; to position ourselves for change to serve diverse populations; and to ensure that OT positions itself within the National Health Service.

Conclusion: OT service provision in the Province is faced with unique contextual and service delivery challenges. This includes poor access by clients to public/private services. OT in the province will need to change service delivery methods to include advocacy for clients in all sectors, particularly in public services, and to improve service delivery to primary health care facilities and in rural areas in order to serve a diverse population.