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Resources for occupational therapy in mental health in Ghana: results of a community-mapping exercise

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Introduction: Two occupational therapists have been posted into two psychiatric hospitals in Ghana and are working to re-establish occupational therapy services. This service is being launched in the context of reforms to improve mental health care and promote disability rights in Ghana. This rights-based agenda is congruent with occupational justice and recovery approaches. However there has to date been no commitment of funds, and interventions for mental health in Ghana focus largely on psycho-pharmaceuticals, rather than rehabilitation and social inclusion. Given such resource constraints, occupational therapists working in African settings have advocated a move to community-based, participatory forms of service delivery, rather than individually focused interventions.

This study aims to: Identify community resources that could support occupational justice, recovery and social integration.

Explore the potential for community partnerships

Methodology: This study uses community resource mapping and qualitative interviews to identify existing resources which could be used to support recovery and social integration for people with mental disorders in Ghana.

Results: The results are expected to identify community resources and networks to support the establishment of an occupational therapy service in a low-resource context. The findings will be used to develop a community-oriented service which promotes recovery and social inclusion, informed by theories of occupational justice.

Conclusion: Community resources have an important role to play in social inclusion. This paper provides an example of how new occupational therapy services with little public sector funding can identify such community resources, and establish partnerships to support occupational justice for people with psychosocial disability.