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An Occupation-Based Community Development Programme with Women to Address the Prevention of Non-Communicable Diseases in South Africa

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In South Africa, 40 % of all deaths are due to non-communicable diseases. NCDs account for a higher proportion of deaths in adults (58%) in Western Cape than anywhere else in the country (38%). While NCDs were previously regarded as diseases of the wealthy, NCDs are now a significant problem amongst the poor. Tobacco use, harmful alcohol use, unhealthy diets, obesity and physical inactivity are common risk factors of NCDs.

Women, due to their position in their families and the community are an ideal group to be empowered to take ownership for their health and well-being through occupational enablement. Therefore, a PhD study was conducted.

Objectives: to explore and describe how women in Fisantekraal perceive NCDs and their current health-risk behaviours and occupational choices, in relation to occupational participation.

Participatory Action Research was utilised with the O-b-CD framework to guide the implementation of the study. Together with the participants, the researcher facilitated data collection. In phase 1, a needs assessment utilizing the photovoice method was conducted in addition to key informant interviews. In phase 2, focus groups were conducted to allow for reflections on data collected and to prioritise their collective needs in respect of enablers for occupational participation. Verbatim transcriptions were done of the audio-recordings. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyse all data. Trustworthiness was ensured through a detailed description of the research process, an audit trail of the data, peer examination and reflexivity. The findings of the study will be used to guide future O-b CD projects.