

Re-imagining clients as communities: Designing a community-centred practice framework for occupational therapy

*Nerida Hyett, Amanda Kenny, Virginia Dickson-Swift
La Trobe University, Bendigo, Victoria, Australia*

Introduction: Traditionally occupational therapists have been viewed as a person-centred healthcare profession. However, there is increasing impetus for occupational therapists to expand their practice from working with individuals in community settings (community-based practice), to working in partnerships with communities (community-centred practice).

Objective: The aim of the research was to design a conceptual framework for community-centred practice in occupational therapy.

Approach: The conceptual framework was developed using qualitative research findings from two case studies. The case studies were a network of Canadian food security programs, and a rural Australian community banking initiative. Cross-case analysis involved drawing key themes from across the case studies, and analysing and interpreting cross-case findings using extant occupational therapy and occupational science knowledge, and relevant social theory. The outcome is a four stage, occupation-focused, community-centred practice framework.

Practice Implications: The framework can be used by occupational therapists to conceptualise:

1. Who is the community client? (Community identity)
 2. What occupations are important to the community? (Community occupations, occupational goal)
 3. What resources can be used to overcome barriers? (Community resources/barriers)
 4. What is the occupational therapists enablement role? (Participation enablement)
- The proposed framework will enable occupational therapists across a broad range of health and non-health settings to strengthen practice with community clients.

Conclusion: Evidence is needed to strengthen occupational therapists practice with communities. The proposed framework can improve occupational therapists abilities to conceptualise community-centred practice. Further research is needed to trial and critically evaluate the framework across a range of socially and culturally diverse community contexts.