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Exploring the experiences in Occupational Therapy management of children with Cerebral Palsy within the Department of Health in KwaZulu-Natal Province

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Introduction: The researcher was exposed to managing large numbers of children with Cerebral Palsy (CP) during community service. The lack of skill and resources for effective treatment were concerns. Given this concern and a dearth in literature from a South African perspective, the researcher initiated this study in order to understand OT's experiences in managing CP within KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) Department of Health (DoH). Objectives: To identify inhibiting and facilitating factors, treatment strategies and measures of efficiency in OT management of children with CP.

Methods: A qualitative study using descriptive phenomenology was used. The PEO model provided a framework for data collection. Data collection methods included focus groups, field notes and journal entries. Data was analysed thematically.

Findings were represented using the PEO Model. "Person" highlighted facilitating themes of personal interest for CP and undergraduate training fostering self-learning. Conversely inhibiting themes included lack of confidence, sense of incompetency, limited practical experience and emotional burnout. "Environment" revealed facilitating factors such as sufficient space, resources, home visits, MDT collaborations and social support as opposed to inhibiting factors of caregiver barriers, limited knowledge about OT, lack of supervision and poor support from DoE. "Occupation" included monthly CP groups run by OTs alongside individual treatment. Efficiency of CP management was measured by note taking and record keeping.

Conclusion: The aforementioned knowledge is valuable in assisting the development of effective methods in overcoming barriers to managing CP. Research into efficiency of CP groups, greater support for clinic OTs and more undergraduate practical experience were some recommendations.