

Bringing Occupational Therapy to Ukraine: International collaboration to establish the profession as a part of rehabilitation reform triggered by wounded soldiers of the Donbas conflict

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Introduction: Careful examination by the World Health Organization has confirmed that the Ukrainian medical model of rehabilitation inherited from the Soviet Union is unable to meet the need for rehabilitation not only in response to soldiers of the current Donbas conflict, but for the population as a whole.

Objectives: This presentation will describe the steps taken to introduce Occupational Therapy, a new rehabilitation profession into the Ukrainian health care and education system.

Approach: A group of medical and educational professionals initiated the introduction of occupational therapy into the modern rehabilitation system of Ukraine at the government level. A private university has been working towards meeting the WFOT requirements for educational programs. Steps have been taken to encourage the Ministries of Health, Education and Social Policy to collaborate in creating opportunities for the education and employment of occupational therapists.

Results: As a result of systemic efforts, occupational therapy as a profession (with official name “ergotherapy”) was recognized in Ukraine in August 2016. There has been close cooperation with WFOT as well as universities in Canada, Estonia and Latvia. A national association was established, the first Master’s program in occupational therapy was licensed and professional qualification requirements were created, among other achievements in shifting towards the bio-psycho-social model of disability in Ukraine.

Conclusion: The need for further collaboration from partners around the world is imperative to provide support in the establishment of occupational therapy as an effective, WFOT approved, evidence-based profession in Ukraine.