

0966

## **The triangular cobweb of factors hindering occupational therapy practice in Ugandan rural communities today**

Mbabazi Evas Nahabwe

*North Kigezi Diocese Orphan Growers and Disabled Children's Project, Rukungiri, Uganda*

**Introduction:** Occupational therapy practice in rural communities in Uganda is much different than practice in the more elite urban areas. Rural communities reject persons with disability (PWD) because they lack knowledge about the causes of and treatment for PWD. Most people are illiterate and are not aware of preventive issues such as pre-natal vitamins with folic acid. Further, family planning is rejected due to cultural and religious norms.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to a) uncover parents' perspective on disability; b) discover environmental, social, and cultural factors hindering occupational therapy practice in southwestern Uganda, and c) explore possibilities of how OT can be effective within these communities.

**Methods:** This study was conducted through observations, semi-structured interviews and focus groups with clients and their families within Rukungiri District. The author collected this data to better understand the challenges PWD and their families face in trying to live life to the fullest.

**Results:** The findings reveal five significant challenges: 1) society's negative attitudes towards disability, which is regarded as "inability", 2) belief in witch craft/curses, 3) children with disabilities are de-valued compared to other members of the community and labelled as "second class citizens" and 4) parents do not understand diseases and causes of disability.

**Conclusion:** The author explores these challenges and offers opportunities for appropriate and effective therapy to improve the condition of PWD and facilitate a positive and hopeful focus on PWD. The struggle continues, however OTs in rural Uganda are ready to change and challenge society.