Critical reflections on patient empowerment, occupational therapy, and occupational justice

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Presented at the World Federation of Occupational Therapy Congress 2018 in Cape Town, South Africa
Introduction

- My interest in this topic
  - Witnessing a sense of powerlessness among my patients
  - Not knowing how to help, i.e. promote empowerment
  - EMPOWERMENT IS ESSENTIAL TO CLIENT-CENTERED PRACTICE
  - EMPOWERMENT IS A CORE ELEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL JUSTICE

Power + Participation = Health

- Necessary social and material resources
- Engagement in meaningful occupations, i.e. occupational justice
Empowerment Theory
(Rappaport, 1990)

- Critical awareness
  - Understanding the systems of power that control one’s ability to act

- Perceived control
  - Perception of one’s ability to exert power in a given situation

- Citizen participation
  - Having a valued and legitimate role in decision-making
  - Equal involvement in community activities

Patient empowerment
(Funnell & Anderson, 2004)

- “helping patients discover and develop the inherent capacity to be responsible for one’s own life”
- “a complex experience of personal change”
- “a method of helping patients select and make changes in their diabetes self management”
- “to promote autonomous self-regulation so that the individual’s potential for health is maximized”
- “a social process of recognizing, promoting and enhancing people’s ability to meet their own needs.”
Q: How do patients define empowerment?
Method & Results

- Systematic literature review on patient empowerment
  - Qualitative research
  - Patient Perspective

- Results
  - 13 articles
  - 11 investigator teams
  - 9 countries: UK, Norway, Australia, Taiwan, New Zealand, China, Iran, Belgium, Italy
  - 205 patients total

- Analysis
  - Meta-study method for qualitative synthesis
    - Meta-theory
    - Meta-data analysis
    - Meta-method
Control

- Empowering
  - Shared decision-making
  - Personal responsibility for health
  - Control over daily life
  - Control over mind
  - Control over symptoms

- Disempowering
  - Uncertainty
  - Coercion
Psychological Coping

- Empowering
  - Acceptance
  - Planning for the future
  - Positive reframing
  - Faith
  - Meaning making
  - Hope
  - Identity integration

- Disempowering
  - Fear
  - Stress
Legitimacy

• Empowering
  • Listening
  • Kindness
  • Respect
  • Responsiveness

• Disempowering
  • Objectification
  • Paternalism
Support

- Empowering
  - Trust in healthcare professionals
  - Peer support
  - Support from family and friends
  - Taking time

- Disempowering
  - Isolation
  - Stigma
Knowledge

- Empowering
  - Strong understanding of illness
  - Information available and accessible
  - Explanations clear

- Disempowering
  - Conflicting information
Participation

• Empowering
  • Maintaining roles
  • Engagement in meaningful activity

• Disempowering
  • Boredom
Meta-method

- Most questions were geared towards **INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES**
- There was a relationship between questions asked and secondary coding of results

Meta-theory

- Most researchers did not describe a guiding theory
- The definitions they used tended to identify individual and interpersonal aspects of empowerment, but were **MISSING STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS**
- In community psychology, these elements would be considered citizen participation
Understanding the role of health systems and services
Empowering healthcare settings
Patient empowerment and engagement
Greater opportunity to achieve client-centered practice
Greater opportunity to promote occupational justice

Thank you!

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