The impact of conceptualisations of disability on development of new Occupational Therapy curriculum in Malawi.

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Population 18 million people
OT in Malawi

Occupational Therapy Association of Malawi (OTAM)

10 Occupational Therapists currently practicing

Development of a Bsc of Occupational Therapy
Curriculum Development

“Having a clear understanding of the local health and welfare needs and how occupational therapists can meet those needs is the starting point for planning a curriculum”

-WFOT, Minimum Standards for the Education of Occupational Therapists
Disability in Malawi

Rate of disability: 2.4% among children and 3.8% in general population\textsuperscript{11}

378000 children could benefit from Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy services and 5400 children are in need of a wheelchair\textsuperscript{3}
William

3 years old

Born with partial formation of limbs in rural village

Carer’s main concern was social stigma
Questions

1. What existing dominant perceptions of disability exist among community members and health workers?

2. What unique skills, attitudes and knowledge can Occupational Therapy bring to bridge gaps formed by difference perceptions?

3. How does this knowledge impact curriculum development?
Perceptions of the cause of disability in Malawian community and carers

- 27% of family believed club foot to be caused by witchcraft\textsuperscript{5}

Other common beliefs:
- Parents carrying out witchcraft to get rich
- A pregnant woman breaking a taboo
- Laughing at others with disability\textsuperscript{6}
Perception of the cause of disability among Rehabilitation Workers

“Birth asphyxia
Infectious diseases during pregnancy
Prolonged labour
Premature delivery and pre-term bleeding
Cerebral Malaria
Congenital deformities
Accidents
Poor health services”
What unique skills, attitudes and knowledge can OT bring?

“Occupational therapy can bring great skills in the rehabilitation system, in a way that it is a wide field which looks at the physical, emotional and social aspect of an individual”

- Rehabilitation Technician
How this knowledge can inform the curriculum development for new OTs

“The primary objective of the BSc Occupational Therapy course at the University of Malawi College of Medicine is to train proficient, resourceful, thoughtful, evidence-based, and empathetic OTs to serve Malawi’s most pressing contemporary rehabilitation needs”

-Malawian OT Curriculum Introduction
How OT can help meet this need?

Balancing the load of resourceful, thoughtful, reflective, empathetic and evidence-based practice

Occupational Therapist
Thank you!

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