Professional reasoning of OT in China, 1986-2006: A historical documentary research

Jinlong Cui, Xiaochang Shi, Peng Liao, Teresa Chiu
24 May, 2018
Importance of OT professional reasoning

"Progress is impossible without change; and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything."

- George Bernard Shaw
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Background

- Physical Rehabilitation

- OT was developed in a cultural context unique to mainland China.

- In 1996, a National Hospital Standard defined OT as:
  - An essential rehabilitation service
  - A therapeutic approach in rehabilitation, not a health profession
Objective

- To understand the development of professional reasoning of OT in China.
Method: A historical documentary research

1) Searched OT papers from 1986 to 2006 in the Chinese Academic Journal database.

2) 2 researchers reviewed the professional reasoning content in each paper.

3) Conducted thematic analysis using an interpretive approach.
OT vs. other professionals as first author (N=52 papers)
Theme One: Ongoing Changes

(1) From OT being an approach used by various healthcare providers to becoming a separate profession.

- In 1996, the first paper with OT as first author was published.

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<td>Total number of paper</td>
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Theme One: Ongoing Changes

(2) From simple and superficial to in-depth and complex professional reasoning.

“….give patients therapeutic OT activities that are interesting. They would focus on completing an action or an activity instead of doing exercise of a particular joint or muscle group. The effect of this kind of training is very good.” (Chen & Ji 1991, p103)

“...the learning is not about doing some kinds of exercise. Instead, it is the learning of functional movements in meaningful daily activities. The functioning and quality of life of the patient can only be improved in this way.” (Jin & Wang 2005)
Theme One: Ongoing Changes

(3) From relying on overseas experience to building on local practice experience.

“Current rehabilitation practice is mostly a direct copy of the Western rehabilitation model.”
(Wang & Yan, 2000)

“Occupational therapy nowadays should not just copy from overseas practice. We must consider the conditions in our country and local contexts in the hospitals.”
(Yan, 2006)
“There is severe shortage but a great demand of essential rehabilitation personnel in our country.”

(Chen, 1988)

“The current curriculum is not designed for physiotherapy nor designed for occupational therapy. The curriculum is designed to train skill-based personnel to address the unique rehabilitation needs urgently needed in our country.”

(Wang, Chen & Xu, 2002)
Theme Two: Sustaining Practice Contexts

(2) Misconceptions of the roles and functions of OT

“Many healthcare providers do not know much about rehabilitation. They know even less about the content, function and value of occupational therapy.”
(Qian et al., 1994)

“Currently, only a few hospitals have set up occupational therapy service. In terms of treatment methods, the main approach is hands-on techniques instead of using activities. One of the reasons is limited understanding of rehabilitation by clients and family members… increase the public awareness of occupational therapy is needed… improve practice standard…”
(Yan, 2003)
Theme Two: Sustaining Practice Contexts

(3) Scope confined to hospital-based rehabilitation for people with physical dysfunction or disability

OT practice in psychiatry, community-based, school-based, and primary care is limited. The situation has not been changed over time.
Conclusion

- OT as a treatment technique, not a profession in early days.
- Improved from 1986 to 2006:
  - gained the status of a profession
  - used more in-depth and complex professional reasoning
  - local context was addressed in practice
- Unchanged, affected professional reasoning:
  - Insufficient supply of qualified occupational therapists
  - Misunderstanding of occupational therapy
  - OT confined to physical rehabilitation in hospitals
Discussion

- The past forms the basis to develop OT in future.
- Another historical documentary research
  - Textbooks published in China from 1984 to 2005
  - 42 textbooks with OT content
- The Huang-Tu Occupation Study
  - A new professional reasoning written in Chinese for use by OTs in China.
Acknowledgements

The founding meeting of the Chinese Occupational Therapy Association, the Chinese Association of Rehabilitation Medicine

中国康复医学会作业治疗专业委员会成立大会

2017年12月9日・北京  Beijing, Dec 09, 2017
Thank you!

14128428g@connect.polyu.hk