

Preparing Occupational Therapy students to integrate spirituality into practice

Mick Collins

Outline of the session

- **Spirituality and health in context:** World Health Organisation & the Department of Health.
- **Research:** Benefits to patient care.
- **Educational context:** Theory – Practice coherence.
- **Occupational Therapy and spirituality at the UEA:** Year's 1, 2, & 3.
- **Student feedback:** Reflections on learning about spirituality

Context

World Health Organization – Quality of Life Domains

Physical Health

Psychological Health

Level of Independence

Social Relationships

Environment

Spirituality, Religion, and Personal Beliefs

Context

Department of Health

Standards for Better Health (2005)

Developmental standard D;

Patients receive effective treatment and care that should;

“Take into account their individual requirements and meet their physical, cultural, spiritual, and psychological needs and preferences”.

Research

Reviews examining the links between spirituality and many physical and mental health conditions found a 60-80% relationship between health improvements and religion/spirituality.

These studies cover; **heart disease, hypertension, CVA, immunological dysfunction, cancer, pain, disability, mortality, and health behaviours. Mental health; psychoses, depression, anxiety, suicide, and personality problems.**

Koenig H. McCullough M. Larson B (2001) Handbook of religion and health. Oxford. Oxford university Press

Benefits



Aiding prevention

Speeding recovery

Fostering equanimity in the face of ill health

Koenig H. McCullough M. Larson B (2001) Handbook of religion and health.
Oxford. Oxford university Press

Spirituality and Occupational Therapy

The inclusion of spirituality in relation to occupational therapy practice is still struggling with a

Theory – Practice gap

Belcham, C. (2004) Spirituality in occupational therapy: theory in practice? *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 67 (1).

This has important implications for how student occupational therapists are trained, in order to be confident to engage spirituality into practice.

The OT curriculum - UEA

Year 1 covers:

- **Spirituality and health** – The role of OT.
- **Definition dilemmas** – Religious – Spiritual – Cultural.
- **Explore boundaries** – Meaning in Life – Meaning of Life.
- **Individual work** – Own views about spirituality.
- **Group work** – Differences – Similarities – Diversity.
- **Case material.**

The OT curriculum - UEA

Year 2 covers:

- **Spirituality** – Awareness.
- **Reflective practice** – Personal shadow.
- **Therapeutic use of Self** – Instrumental – Authentic – Transpersonal.
- **Group work** – Interests – Difficulties – Complexities.
- **Continuing professional development** – Focus on an issue that has arisen from this session.
- **Spiritual assessments** – Focus on patient need.

The OT curriculum - UEA

Year 3 covers:

- **Case example** – 15 year-old girl with quadriplegia.
- **Metaskills** – Values – Qualities.
- **Spiritual art of therapy** – Agency – Placebo – Nocebo.
- **Spiritual dynamics** – Meaning – Becoming.
- **Complexities** – Informed consent.
- **Quality of life** – Improvements

Student feedback

Examining the personal shadow was challenging and I found it difficult. However, during the reflective week I re-visited this and it made more sense.

After this I think that I would feel more confident in asking about spiritual issues.

From the very first session my interest was sparked and I have spent a lot of time over the weeks with some kind of debate/thought process about spirituality going on in my head, especially regarding upcoming elective placement.

I am biased when it comes to others spiritual beliefs, sometimes without realising it. This module has really helped me reflect on this and I will remember it in future practice.

I may not feel comfortable yet approaching spirituality in practice even with assessments to guide thinking – but it has certainly created awareness of what issues to consider.

This was excellent and made me open my mind.

It has given me more confidence to address these issues in practice.

Excerpts taken from student feedback following a 6 week module run on spirituality and occupational therapy, which covered the same teaching material outlined above.