

## **Update**

### **POSITION STATEMENT**

#### **CONSUMER INTERFACE WITH OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY**

#### **(Occupational Therapists responding to the expressed needs of Consumers)**

##### **Introductory statement of the purpose of this paper**

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) acknowledges the philosophical and theoretical framework of the profession of Occupational Therapy around the world and endorses its potential as a health promoting discipline that enables people's participation and active engagement in healthy living. Occupational Therapy services are delivered in collaborative partnerships with the expressed needs of the client being central to the process; i.e. the consumers of occupational therapy services.

This paper presents a proactive approach to listening to the voice of occupational therapy clients, families, care givers, and community agencies to collaboratively address the needs they have identified.

##### **Statement of the position being taken**

The WFOT endorses and encourages active collaboration between occupational therapists and individuals and groups that are interested in or need to improve their participation in occupation(s). The WFOT position recognises and supports:

- Strategies that enable effective partnerships to be developed at individual, family and community levels;
- The inclusiveness of consumers as valued representatives on advisory groups that can influence the direction and vision of occupational therapy into the future;
- The diverse settings, groups and cultures for occupational therapy practice and the uniqueness of therapy practice in these contexts; and
- Building the profession on a shared and established unifying framework that promotes consumer participation in all occupational therapy contexts.

##### **Statement of the significance of position or issue to occupational therapy**

Active collaboration between occupational therapists and consumers is integral to the philosophy and practice of occupational therapy. It is closely aligned with the WFOT direction for creating partnerships with consumers that arises from the mandate stated by the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993)<sup>i</sup>. In addition the World Health Organisation (WHO 1948)<sup>ii</sup> recognized that health is not defined by the absence of disease, but rather the extent to which people are able to participate in satisfying and productive lives.

## **Statement of significance of the position to society/client**

Active and equal engagement of occupational therapists with consumers in advocating for improved quality of life in the wider society is essential to raise the following:

- Cultural awareness and sensitivity;
- Professional awareness among occupational therapists and occupational therapy students;
- Public awareness and access to occupational therapy profession; and
- Political awareness to lobby for consumer positions on relevant health, education, and welfare issues.

## **Substantiating rationale for the position**

The WFOT Consumer Interface Project 2008 document “Consumer Interface with Occupational Therapy: Voices of People with Disabilities”, fully outlines the rationale behind this position statement.

## **Conclusion**

This WFOT Position Statement recommends the following strategies and actions to promote “Occupational Therapists responding to the expressed needs of Consumers”<sup>iii</sup>:

1. Education of government, employers and funders of occupational therapy services with regard to the unified purpose of the profession to improve quality of life outcomes for clients by engagement in meaningful occupations;
2. Education of occupational therapists, and occupational therapy students to improve quality of life outcomes through listening to and advocating for client issues regarding inclusion, access to health education, employment, accommodation , technology, access to the physical environment and others that may arise; and
3. Relationships with client and consumer organisations or client advocating organisations to develop partnerships and collaboration that addresses occupational therapy service enhancements.

## **References:**

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<sup>i</sup> The United Nations Secretariat for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (1993), The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, United Nations, resolution 48/96, 20 December 1993. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r096.htm>

<sup>ii</sup> World Health Organisation (1948), Definition of Health, World Health Organisation. <http://www.who>.

<sup>iii</sup> Passmore, A. et al (2008): Consumer Interface with Occupational Therapy: Voices of People with Disabilities, WFOT Bulletin, Vol. 58, November, 33-47. <http://www.wfot.org>