

Community-based occupational therapists' experiences with utilizing their core competencies in assistive technology provision

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Background and aim

Context

- Community-based health services in Norway
- Assistive technology - increasing demands
- Role of occupational therapists (OTs) in assessment and provision

Aim

- Examine how OTs utilize their core competencies in assistive technology provision
- How this influence their professional role and capacity to address challenges in community-based health services



Methods

Qualitative study

- 7 focus group interviews
- 31 occupational therapists
- 13 municipalities

Thematic analysis



Results: 4 themes

1. Professional challenges in assistive technology provision
2. Significance of occupational therapy assessment
3. Occupational perspective in practice
4. Desire to shift from “assistive technology OT” to “occupational OT”



Theme 1: Professional challenges in assistive technology provision

“You find yourself balancing waiting lists and external expectations against the focus you want to maintain...”

But it has ended up in a way that assistive technology has taken attention away from enabling people to manage on their own.”

“There is so little time for those fine words about activity, mastery, and all that.”

Theme 2: Significance of occupational therapy assessment

“The assistive device is something that must work for the person.

*How does the person live, what does the person do in daily life, how does the body work,
what should the person be able to accomplish?*

The person’s occupations must be the focus when adapting assistive devices.”

Theme 3: Occupational perspective in practice

“I think many people immediately think of assistive devices when an occupational therapist arrives: ‘What assistive devices can we use here?’

But they do not know everything else we can do - such as conducting an occupational performance analysis.”

“We actually want to focus on training and enabling people to manage on their own. I believe that is the knowledge missing in the municipalities.”

Theme 4: Desire to shift from “assistive technology OT” to “occupational OT”

“I would prefer to move more towards being an occupation-focused therapist rather than an assistive technology therapist.”

I want to help people live well and master everyday life in all areas.”

“We should not just solve the situation here and now and then close the door.

When we assess a situation, we must see the person - an individual who needs to function in the long term - and avoid taking the quickest possible solution.”

Key messages

Occupational therapists must:

- Advocate for interventions that prioritize occupation and participation
- Use occupation-based assessments
- Strengthen professional identity
- Establish organizational structures that enable full use of occupational therapists' expertise



Reference

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[« You can't just use a Tupperware solution»: Community based occupational therapists' experiences of using their core competence in assistive technology provision”]

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VITENSKAP

«Det nytter ikke å ta en sånn der Tupperware-løsning»

KOMMUNEERGOTERAPEUTERS ERFARINGER MED BRUK AV SIN KJERNEKOMPETANSE I HJELPEMIDDELFORMIDLING

Av Guri Einbu & Linda Stigen

Abstract

Introduction: The aim of this study was to explore how municipal occupational therapists apply their core competencies in assistive technology provision and how this impacts their professional role and ability to address challenges within municipal health services.

Method: Seven focus group interviews were conducted with a total of 31 municipal occupational therapists. The data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis.

Results: Four main themes emerged: Professional challenges in assistive technology provision, the significance of occupational therapists' assessments in assistive technology provision, the activity perspective in practice and a desire to transition from being an «assistive technology occupational therapist» to an «activity occupational therapist».

Conclusion: The study reveals professional dilemmas related to assistive technology provision and emphasizes a need for a stronger focus on core competencies and the activity perspective in occupational therapists' practice. By utilizing activity-based assessment and evaluation, occupational therapists can more effectively argue for interventions that promote health, rehabilitation, and mastery of everyday activities, rather than being limited to compensatory measures through assistive devices. To ensure evidence-based practice, municipal occupational therapists must work towards establishing organizational structures and frameworks that enable a broad application of their core competencies and discipline-specific knowledge and skills.

Keywords: Municipal health services, professional identity, discipline-specific skills and knowledge, assistive technology provision.



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Det er ingen usenighet blant forfatterne om rettighetene til manuskriptet.

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