

Editorial comment

It is sad for us to see that two Occupational Therapists, who were very important in the development of occupational therapy in South Africa, have died this year. Most of us "older" occupational therapists will remember Jean Hart well and the substantial contribution that she made to the development of the profession particularly in the Western Cape. Muriel Crusaz also paid an important role in that she was part of the team that started the first training for occupational therapists in the country at the University of the Witwatersrand.

With this edition of SAJOT the editorial committee has attempted to do something different i.e. we have compiled a supplement to this volume of the Journal which contains papers of interest given at the Occupational Therapy Africa Regional Group (OTARG) conference held in Zanzibar in 2007. The publication of the supplement was decided on as most of the papers were not research based; however it was felt that they were of interest to the profession. SAJOT adheres to the criteria listed in the "Code of best practice"¹ laid down by the National Scholarly Editors' Forum which falls under the ambit of the Academy of Science of South Africa. It is important that our national publication be an internationally recognised journal which publishes quality research in occupational therapy (OT), and more specifically OT related to the African environment² as it has been noted that the best scientific journals are those that provide information not given in other journals. Therefore, papers that give insight into the unique circumstances that may cause the work of South African and other African therapists to differ from that of the rest of the world are of particular interest².

Also mentioned in SAJOT 2008² was the need for articles dealing with the outcomes of OT with People Living with HIV and AIDS. It is therefore pleasing to find that we have, in this edition, an article on the value of a beadwork project implemented with women living with HIV and AIDS³ and which is used for income generation. The participants recognised that being involved in the beadwork had also fostered skills development and creativity as well as enabling sharing and support among members to take place. In addition the project plays a part in helping the women to fulfil their life roles. As the project was coupled with visits to a clinic, more regular attendance at the clinic and at support groups was encouraged. This paper provides insight into the types of work that can be undertaken with people living with HIV and AIDS and points out when OT can play an important part in "moving beyond a medical and individualised deficit approach towards a more socially engaged practice"^{4:1}.

The fact that the Journal still does not receive a significant number of articles on OT with people living with HIV and AIDS may be due to insufficient knowledge regarding the different aspects of HIV and AIDS and the treatment thereof. The survey of occupational therapists and physiotherapists carried out by Concha et al⁵ found that, in its sample of South African occupational therapists and physiotherapists included for the study, there were many who did

not appear to have a good understanding of HIV and AIDS and of its treatment. Unfortunately this finding is supported by the literature. It seems therefore that there is a need for specific training of occupational therapists to be able to treat the many people living with HIV and AIDS at either the undergraduate or post graduate level. This paper leads one to believe that there are important instances where an understanding of the medical and specific deficits of clients can lead to realistic intervention incorporating a variety of approaches and models.

Included in this edition there is an interesting scientific letter by Van Vuuren and Nel⁶ which investigated the teaching and learning possibilities of using a Clinical Skills Centre (CSC) as part of the skills training of OT students. The results of the study indicated that there would be benefits for training centres in setting up CSCs, further ensuring the equality of teaching and of the learning in certain aspects of the OT curriculum.

The paper by Visser and Franzsen⁷ describe the study that they conducted into a possible association between omitted crawling and problems with pencil grasp and control in children aged five to six years. Their findings, that there was a statistically significant difference between those children who crawled and those who did not with regards to pencil grasp and visual perception but not pencil control, have interesting implications for occupational therapy. These findings will also influence the guidance that therapists give to parents who make use of "jolly jumpers and "walking rings" for their children as these apparatus limit the time that the child spends crawling.

References

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