

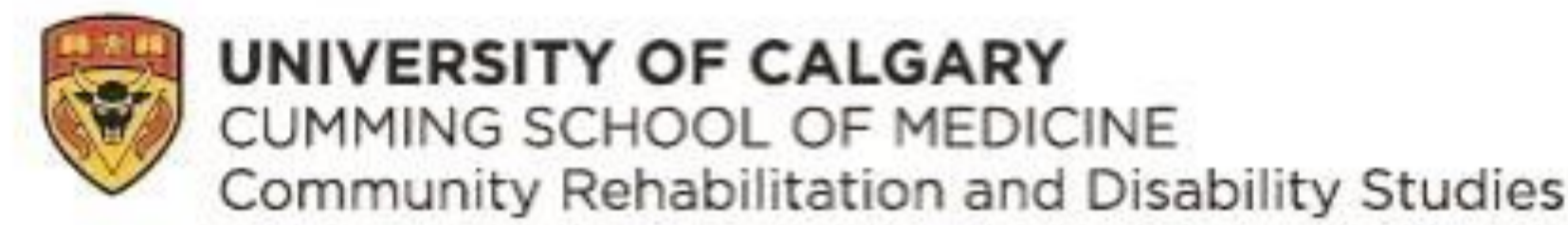
Portrayal of Occupational Therapy (OT) in Canadian newspapers

From first appearance (1918) to 2016

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Introduction: Milestones of OT in Canada

- 1914 — 1918 World War I: The organized practice of occupational therapy (OT) received its acknowledgement in Canada. OTs took on an important role in the military hospitals (1).
- 1920s — 1940s: OT expanded beyond injured soldiers and veterans to children with disabilities and general hospitals (2).
- 1940s: This was the defining decade in which OT became firmly established in Canada (3).
- 1950s — 1960s: There was an increased demand to act in an advisory capacity to governments and other organizations (4).
- 1970s: OT became nationally organized and reinforced in the educational system. The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) was established. (5)
- 1980s: OTs were encouraged to take global interest in social issues, as well as to advocate for people living with chronic illnesses and disabilities.(6)
- 1991 to 2001: OT shifted away from a medical lens towards promotion of well-being, enablement, community-based practices with new roles in companies and greater government relations (7).

Purpose of the Study

- According to Polatajko, editor-in-chief of the Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy, Canadian OTs believe “that no one knows who they are and what their role is” (8).
- Newspapers are established as an influential source of knowledge for the public.
- The study analyzed the portrayal of OT in The Globe and Mail from 1918-2016 and the Canadian newsstand complete (CNC) which covers 300 Canadian newspapers from 1980-2016.

Method

- Step 1: Academic articles from 2009-2016 of the Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy and OccupationTherapyNow (a Canadian OT practitioner journal) were accessed through the University of Calgary Library.
 - 779 articles were downloaded into Atlas.ti, a qualitative data analysis software. Through inductive and deductive means, we identified a) medical terms, b) clients of occupational therapy and c) social issues affecting clients of occupational therapy and the field of occupational therapy.
- Step 2: The Globe and Mail and the CNC were searched for the words and phrases identified under step 1

Results

Table 1 shows some results for the Globe and Mail.

For the CNC:

- N=53 terms linked to a medical narrative were identified in step 1 (method). Of these terms, all n=53 terms are mentioned in the CNC 1980-2016 articles whereby n=18 are mentioned in more than 10%
- N=33 terms indicating clients were identified in step 1 (method). All are present in the CNC 1980-2016 articles some (e.g. soldier, veteran, patient) to the same extent as the source and some (e.g. client) to a much lower extent
- N=59 terms and phrases indicating social issues faced by clients of occupational therapy or the field of occupational therapy were identified in Step 1 (method). Of these, n=43 are mentioned 0% or less than 1% in the CNC 1980-2016 articles and only n=2 are mentioned above 10%

Discussion and Conclusion

- The reader is not sufficiently informed regarding the scope of OT and the role of Occupational Therapists
- OT is consistently portrayed medically, despite their shift towards a social lens
- Misrepresentations of OT pose a problem to the profession as people might join or not join the OT field under false assumptions.

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(9)



(10)

Table 1. Frequency of OT related themes in The Globe and Mail

Keywords	Frequency of Keywords Mentioned in The Globe and Mail Categorized into Years				
	1800-1917	1918-1949	1950-1979	1980-1999	2000-2014
Occupational therapy	0	788 (1 st time 1918)	348	78	42
Occupational Therapy Concepts					
Homeless/homelessness		0	0	1	0
Engage with political issues			0	0	0
Poverty			0	2	1
Human rights			1	0	0
Social justice/inclusion/right				0	0
Culturally/marginal groups				0	0
Sustainability				0	0
Occupational science				0	0
Enablement				0	0
Occupational justice					0
Occupational rights					0
Clients					
Disabled	0	29	18	9	2
Children	0	233	138	23	22
Soldier		112	6	1	1
Veteran		64	15	0	2
Mental (people with mental issues)		84	58	18	4
Elderly		8	26	11	2
Immigrant		0	0	0	0
Addict		0	5	1	0
Sex offender			0	0	1
Aboriginal People			0	0	0
Criminal		0	1	1	1