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**Developing the potential of occupational science through intercultural dialogue**

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## Developing the potential of occupational science through intercultural dialogue

### Abstract

Intercultural dialogue is critical for the development of occupational science as it facilitates collaboration in occupational science education and research. Establishing networks and exchanging ideas through collaboration strengthens the potential of occupational science to contribute to professional practice and social policy.

### Keywords

dialogue, developing, science, intercultural, occupational, potential

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**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

**Intercultural dialogue between Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy**  
**Occupational science in research and education: developments, discussions and potential.**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Occupational science and its relationship to occupational therapy**

*Hans Jonsson, PhD, Ass. Professor, Occupational Therapist (reg) and head of the Master Program at Division of Occupational Therapy, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden.*

Hans Jonsson will give a short background on the history and rationale behind the development of occupational science, its potential to develop unique knowledge in human development and its relation to occupational therapy and application within health-care.

**Developing the potential of occupational science through intercultural dialogue**

*Dr. Alison Wicks, Director Australasian Occupational Science Centre (AOSC), West Nowra, Australia*

Intercultural dialogue is critical for the development of occupational science as it facilitates collaboration in occupational science education and research. Establishing networks and exchanging ideas through collaboration strengthens the potential of occupational science to contribute to professional practice and social policy.

The Inaugural International Occupational Science Think Tank in 2006 provided the first forum for intercultural dialogue on occupational science education and research.

The nineteen participants represented seven national and international occupational science organizations and came from nine different countries. During the dialogue it became apparent there is a diverse range of occupational science education and research programs around the world. Participants at the think tank agreed such diversity adds richness and depth to occupational science rather than limits its growth. At the same time the national representatives shared some common interests and goals which were incorporated into a Strategic Direction gifted to future think tanks. The second International Occupational Science Think Tank in 2007 continued the intercultural dialogue which resulted in a Strategic Plan to take occupational science forward through international collaboration.

The purpose of this presentation by Dr Alison Wicks is to 'set the scene' for the subsequent workshops on occupational science in education and research and inspire intercultural dialogue. Dr Wicks will provide an overview of the development of occupational science around the world. She will also share the

outcomes of the international occupational science think tanks and some strategies for establishing networks.

Dr Wicks is President of the International Society for Occupational Science. She is passionate about developing occupational science internationally and mainstreaming an occupational perspective through international and interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement. She hosted the first international occupational science think tank in Australia and coordinated the second think tank in the United States. In her role as Director of the Australasian Occupational Science Centre at the University of Wollongong in Australia, she conducts occupation-based projects with a range of local partners with the aim of promoting occupational science globally.

### **Research in occupational therapy and occupational science in Europe**

*Dr. Chris Mayers, PhD, ECOTROS, York St John University, York, United Kingdom, project group member ECOTROS*

The European Cooperation in Occupational Therapy Research and Occupational Science (ECOTROS) aims to bring together occupational therapists interested in research in order to promote and facilitate international cooperation. A brief overview of the activities ECOTROS has undertaken will be given.

A key objective of the ECOTROS group in 2005/06 was to undertake a survey to identify occupational therapists and institutions who are undertaking research in each country in Europe. The specific objectives of the survey were to:

- Identify these occupational therapists; their place of work and their qualifications
- Identify the topic, range and type of research being undertaken in the hope that inexperienced researchers could contact those with more experience for advice, collaboration, supervision and mentoring

Questionnaires were emailed to ECOTROS contact people within 14 European countries. Responses were obtained from 112 individuals and information was given about 142 studies being undertaken within 7 countries. Data was only collected from occupational therapists undertaking post-graduate research; and those who were willing for their name and study details to be placed on the ECOTROS website.

The results of the survey will be given in the paper presentation. These results include:

- Academic qualification: 89% had a Masters degree, PhD or were studying for a higher degree.
- Employment area: mainly within Higher Education
- Research topic: the majority were undertaking research related to 'Professional Issues'.
- Supervisor: frequently occupational therapists in Sweden and the UK.
- Funding: very few obtained funding from charities, voluntary, professional or research bodies.