

POSITION STATEMENT

DIVERSITY AND CULTURE

Introductory statement of the purpose of this paper

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) recognises the increased awareness and focus of occupational therapists in culture and diversity. This is linked with the profession's person-centered approach to service delivery and a need for an inclusive society in which all persons benefit from equitable opportunities for participation.

This paper is derived from the WFOT document *Guiding Principles for Diversity and Culture* (2009) ¹ and aligns closely with the United Nations' (UN) statement in *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*:

“Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.”
(Article 2, 1948) ²

Statement of the position being taken

The WFOT promotes the essential need for all occupational therapists to practise in accordance with their own and people's beliefs, values, practices and ways of being (Hocking and Emery, 2002).³

Statement of the significance of position or issue to occupational therapy

Occupational therapy acknowledges that every person is unique in the way they combine the dynamic interplay between cultural, social, psychological, biological, financial, political and spiritual elements in their personal occupational performance and participation in society.

The WFOT *Code of Ethics* ⁴ states that occupational therapists have the responsibility to consider the cultural diversity, lifestyles and perspectives of the people they serve.

The WFOT endorses four essential principles in relation to diversity and culture;

1. Diversity matters: evidence from research
2. Human rights and inclusiveness matter: occupation, participation, cultural awareness and sensitivity
3. Language matters: the power of words
4. Competence matters: attitude, knowledge and skills

Statement of significance of the position to society/client

Occupational therapy acknowledges that every person is unique in the way they combine the dynamic interplay between cultural, social, psychological, biological, financial, political and spiritual elements in their personal occupational performance and participation in society.

Adherence to the principles in this paper will ensure the following:

- ◆ Awareness of occupational therapists and occupational therapy students of the contextual diversity of people
- ◆ Inclusive and culturally safe occupational therapy practice.

Conclusion

This WFOT Position Statement recommends the following strategies and actions to promote adherence to the **Guiding Principles on Diversity and Culture (2009)**¹ by occupational therapists and occupational therapy students:

1. Cognisance of diversity and culture
2. Respect for each individual's culture
3. Competently respond to the above within their practice
4. Incorporation of these principles into the knowledge, skills and attitudes of occupational therapy in education, practice and research.

References:

- ¹ Kinébanian, A., Stomph, M. (2009): *Guiding Principles on Diversity and Culture*. WFOT. www.wfot.org
- ² United Nations (1948): *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Article 2). www.un.org
- ³ Hocking, C., Emery, I. (2002): *NZAOT Presentation to the WFOT 50th Anniversary Celebration* (Stockholm), New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (NZAOT), unpublished.
- ⁴ WFOT: *Code of Ethics* (revised 2005). www.wfot.org