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Increasing the Participation of Men in Occupational Therapy

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Introduction

Participation by men in the occupational therapy profession is very low, 6.4% in Australia. Job satisfaction among male and female occupational therapists in Australia is similar and the time frame of males considering leaving the profession longer, 8.4 years, compared to women, 7.8 years. The issue therefore appears to be the recruitment and retention of male students in entry level degree programs. This is reflected in the statistics from one Australian university where the proportion of males graduating in occupational therapy averages 6%. No studies have been found that explore the experience of male occupational therapy students in entry level degree programs or factors that positively and negatively affect recruitment and retention.

Aim

To gain the perspective of male occupational therapists and occupational therapy students regarding;

- a) What could be done to increase the appeal of occupational therapy as a career option for men? And
- b) What can be done to enhance the student experience of men in entry level occupational therapy programs?

Methods

Focus groups were conducted, with men who are currently students in an occupational therapy program, and male occupational therapists. The focus group discussions were digitally audio recorded and transcribed, and analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings

Findings to be presented will include participants perceptions regarding; what could be done to increase the appeal of occupational therapy as a career option for men and what could be done to enhance the student experience of men in entry level occupational therapy degree programs.

Conclusion

This study provides an insight into some of the factors affecting recruitment and retention of male students in entry level occupational therapy degree programs. These factors may inform changes to the structure and delivery of such programs as well as strategies to promote the profession to men.