

## Participation and Mental Health: An Example of Theory Development in Occupational Therapy

*Katrina Bannigan<sup>1</sup>, Jane Cronin-Davis<sup>1</sup>, Anna Read<sup>2</sup>, Joanne Inman<sup>3</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> York St John University, Research Centre for Occupation & Mental Health, York, United Kingdom

<sup>2</sup> University of York, Department of Health Sciences, York, United Kingdom

<sup>3</sup> Lancashire NHS Foundation Trust, Preston, United Kingdom

**Introduction.** The International Classification of Functioning, Disability & Health (ICF) (2001) identified that health is defined not just by illness but by the impact on the individual's ability to live the life they want. This appreciation that severity of symptoms does not always correlate to a person's level of disability is critical. When used and applied appropriately for individuals and societies, the ICF has a huge potential for re-focussing what and how we enable healthy individuals and societies. This means it has implications for service delivery and organisation as well as resource allocation. The challenge for occupational therapy is that activities and participation are considered together. The ICF (2001) does not clearly articulate the unique characteristics of participation. Conceptual clarity of participation is needed to achieve a common language for describing health and health related states. The clear articulation of participation will then enable the development of valid tools for measurement in clinical and academic arenas.

**The aim.** The aim of the respective research is to critically explore methods of theory construction in order to develop a conceptual framework of participation in mental health.

**Materials and methods.** A critical literature review was undertaken to identify relevant methods of theory construction.

**Results.** Thirteen methods of concept analysis were identified many of which were derived from a framework developed by Wilson in 1963 [Beckwith et al., 2008]. Key elements of concept analysis were identified. Walker and Avant's (2011) method of theory development is widely used in nursing [Manais, 2010] and is developing credence in occupational therapy [Wagman et al., 2011]. Walker & Avant's (2011) approach to theory construction is applicable to occupational therapy because it enables the development of theory that is not only defensible but congruent with practice. This approach was adopted to develop the concept of participation in mental health.

**Conclusions.** With conceptual clarity, a common language for describing health and health related states emerges. It also enables tools to be developed to measure participation in clinical practice and research studies. The Research Centre for Occupation & Mental Health (RCOMH) will use the theory of participation in mental health to design robust research studies about the effectiveness of occupational therapy in mental health.