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Collaboration between Occupational Therapists and Architects to Incorporate Universal Design to Increase Accessibility

Michelle C. L. Hoff

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, m.hoff@usa.edu

Susan MacDermott

University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, smacdermott@usa.edu

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Collaboration between Occupational Therapists and Architects to Incorporate Universal Design to Increase Accessibility

Michelle C. L. Hoff, OTS; Susan MacDermott, OTD, OTR/L

BACKGROUND

- ❖ While both occupational therapists and architects consider accessibility and universal design, occupational therapists focus on accessibility for the user, whereas architects focus on the space (Gomes & Emmel, 2020; Lenker & Perez, 2014).
- ❖ Both occupational therapists and architects have separate terminology and frameworks which pose a barrier to working together (Wagenfeld & Reynolds, 2017).
- ❖ ADA requirements do not apply private, single-family homes (United States Access Board, 2014).
- ❖ Over 70% of individuals aged 45 and older strongly agree with wanting to remain in their current residence for as long as possible (AARP, 2010).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

- ❖ Collaboration between occupational therapists and architects has involved barriers including the preferred autonomy of architects, differences between each profession's language, and lack of information regarding each profession's skillset and scope of practice.

PURPOSE

- ❖ To advocate for collaboration between occupational therapists and architects to incorporate universal design into new homes and community buildings to increase accessibility.

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LEARNING EXPERIENCES

- ❖ Learning experiences included activities student completed to increase knowledge of universal design and the architecture profession, identify supports/barriers to interprofessional collaboration, and develop relationships with professionals in the field.

Online Surveys

- 5 surveys created to discover the understanding of universal design, knowledge of occupational therapy, and collaboration for:
 - Architects & Designers
 - Architecture Students
 - Architecture Professors
 - City Developers/Planners/Engineers
 - Occupational Therapists and/or HMOTA members

Interviews

- Semi-structured
- Collaboration experiences
- Knowledge and usage of universal design, aging-in-place, visitability, and accessibility
- Barriers/supports to interprofessional collaboration

Architecture

- Associated Design & Engineering, Inc. (Fresno, CA)
- AIA Seminar – Highlighting Accessibility Amendments in the 2022 CBC
- Learning AutoCAD & AutoCAD 2023 Essential Training LinkedIn courses

ECHM Course Series

- 5 Courses
 - The Basics and Beyond
 - How to Get it Done
 - Funding Resources and Financing Mechanisms
 - Raising Community Awareness and Coalition Building
 - The Ethics of Home Modification

HMOTA

- Weekly virtual meetings 1st & 3rd Monday of every month
- Subscription to HMOTA.org network
- Guest speakers of innovative products and companies

Other Experiences

- Community observations
- Podcasts
- Abilities Expo
- Webinars

RESULTS

- ❖ Two overarching themes emerged:
 1. Funding is a barrier for professionals and community members
 2. There is limited knowledge of an occupational therapist's role and value when working with architects and other building professionals

DISCUSSION

- ❖ Survey responses confirmed literature findings that report there are barriers to interprofessional collaboration between occupational therapists and architects (Wagenfeld & Reynolds, 2017).

CONCLUSION

- ❖ A poorly designed built environment can severely limit accessibility for and individual with a disability.
- ❖ In contrast, a well-designed environment can support occupational performance of individuals of all ages and abilities.
- ❖ The design of built environments can be improved through the interprofessional collaboration between occupational therapists and architects.

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