

An 'electric' event

Wendy Sherwood reports from the first national Model of Creative Ability Occupational Therapy Conference

Last year, the first conference dedicated to the Model of Creative Ability (MOCA) in the UK took place in London. The conference was organised by the International Creative Ability Network (ICAN) in response to the rapid development of a community of Model of Creative Ability practitioners in recent years (*OTnews*, April 2009, page 21), and the need to share knowledge and experience of the model.

The conference was full to capacity, with 135 OTs, assistants, managers, education and nursing professionals, and all were brimming with anticipation. The atmosphere throughout the day was so electric that it was tangible, fuelled by inspiring presentations on the conference theme 'Transformation'.

The conference was opened by Annie Heining, head of OT service in South Essex Partnership University NHS Trust (SEPT). SEPT, the event sponsor, is also a partnership organisation in the Model of Creative Ability Interest Group (MCAIG).

Reflecting on the experience of leading the implementation of the model within SEPT, as the first UK trust to adopt it, Annie spoke of her observation of OTs trained in the model as 'very competent and confident therapists'. The confidence is in being activity-focused, preventing absorption into generic roles and loss of professional identity, and competence in clinically reasoned occupational therapy.

The model has worked well in multidisciplinary practice with very positive feedback, particularly from consultants. More broadly, the model maps well to recovery as the dominant paradigm in mental health services. Importantly, the model enables therapists to work with all clients including those that may previously have been thought of as 'not motivated' or 'not ready' for OT – this is a redundant viewpoint when working with the model.

Work is underway in the trust on developing assessment and report paperwork across services and also on the recording of outcomes informed by the model. On this note, Annie acknowledged that there is much work still to be done in

relation to the model, but this is spurred on by the positive contribution that the model has already made to occupational therapy practice and to clients.

Following this opening address, the keynote speech, 'The South African Model of Creative Ability: a personal contextual perspective', was delivered by Dain van der Reyden from the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal, South Africa. It was a great privilege to have Dain provide this speech as an expert involved with the model since its inception 40 years ago. Dain is also a lead for the university's OT undergraduate programme as the second partnership organisation in MCAIG.

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Dain provided a history of the model within the South African context, outlining the enormous achievements of Vona du Toit who developed the theory of creative ability. With great humour, Dain captured the audience, recounting her experience of Vona du Toit's exhausting drive to make occupational therapy a theory driven, purposeful activity based, effective profession.

Dain reminded delegates that while one of the values of the model is its clear guide to grading and using activity for therapeutic intervention, this must not be pursued at the cost of losing the very essence of the model's underpinning theory. That is, the uniqueness of each client and his/her spiritual aspect and the meaning ascribed to his/her life and the world, and the importance of truly purposeful activity.

Dain warned against using the model simply as implementing a set of principles and techniques. Furthermore, Dain encouraged delegates to think critically about the model. One of its strengths is that

it is well established in practice. Many years of experience in South Africa supports assertions that it is an effective model.

However, a corresponding weakness is the lack of an evidence-base and research, and that the explanation of the model in contemporary literature is not comprehensive enough. Dain reviewed the opportunities that we have to address these issues and advocated an international partnership for undertaking this work.

International partnerships were strongly evident at the conference, which became an international endeavour. Kobi e Zietsman, from South Africa, presented on multimodal sensory stimulation work for clients on the lowest levels of creative ability within a long-term care service for people with chronic mental illness.

Kobie spoke of the great challenge for OTs to develop and provide meaningful programmes for clients on these levels. Kobie gave a clear explanation of how the model guided sensory focused therapy and a clear illustration of its effectiveness. This work was also informed through collaboration with Flo Longhorn, from Belgium, who is widely acknowledged for her expertise in sensory stimulation work in the field of learning disabilities and who also presented at the conference.

Yoshiko Nakano, from Saga, Japan, provided an inspiring insight into the process of learning the model by Japanese OTs with limited English language; understanding and translating unfamiliar terminology, and implementing the model into the first forensic services in Japan.

This was followed by an impressive presentation by Takeshi Misawa, from Tokyo, Japan, of a how the model guided a comprehensive approach to rehabilitation for clients in a forensic service, through OT-nurse collaboration, so that these disciplines were using the same activities in an informed way to meet therapeutic aims.

British OTs made a major contribution to the conference through presentations and a wide range of posters. Michelle Taylor and Annie Crofton, from Kneesworth House, used an imaginative approach to presenting a case from forensic practice of a client with

a personality disorder, using audio inserts of narrative to demonstrate the process of using the model.

Esther Day and Lauren Tinning, community learning disabilities team, SEPT, used video footage of trampolining with a client, demonstrating in action the relevance of the model's intervention guide.

Owen Chinembiri, SEPT, reported on how the model had transformed an acute mental health service. Prior to using the model, intervention was not routinely provided for acutely unwell clients deemed as too difficult to engage. Following the introduction of the model, occupational therapy delivery was reviewed, highlighting why some intervention was not as effective as it could be.

This led to redesigning OT to meet the needs of all clients (understood in levels of creative ability) including those not receiving a service previously. After two years of developing their intervention, the team achieved higher client attendance and improved quality of engagement.

Belafonte Hosier, St Andrew's Healthcare, provided an informative illustration of how MOCA and the Model of Human Occupation (MOHO) are used alongside each other in an adolescent medium secure service. The key and crucial contribution of MOCA has been to enable better understanding of how to engage clients with

different motivation levels in order to provide the 'just right challenge'.

The model guides group and individual intervention; use of individual client work sheets documenting meaningful activities and guidance on how best to facilitate these; prioritisation and planning of intervention – whether it needs to be individual, small or large group work and the amount of input that is required from the OT team to enable clients to participate successfully.

Reports have been developed integrating MOHO and MOCA findings, and the latter informs recommendations on how to work with the client to meet aims.

Jackie Pool, of Jackie Pool Associates, presented the Pool Activity Levels, which have similarities to the levels of creative ability and are extremely useful to guide practice for clients with dementia. Helen Mason, from Animation in Therapy Ltd, gave an introduction to her exciting and innovative use of animation with young people as an activity that can be graded to help clients achieve optimum occupational performance levels with the right therapeutic facilitation.

Sharon Rautenbach and Sharon Green gave feedback on the first delivery in the world of a masters level module on the MOCA at SEPT, in recognition of a growing demand for in-depth training for practitioners who have been using the

model and wanting to extend their knowledge base.

The amount of activity undertaken in SEPT was further emphasised by the presentation of the MCAIG Award for Occupational Therapy Support Workers 2008 to Jacqui Schon, OT Technician with Basildon Learning Disabilities Team, for her significant contribution to the team's development of knowledge and skills for using the model.

With all of these contributions, it is not surprising that the conference was a truly great day and many delegates were talking about it for a long time afterwards. I was extremely proud of the contribution made by the British OTs and assistants. For many in the UK, understanding of the model is still at the novice stage, yet they were prepared to present in the midst of experts.

Dain van der Reyden stated that she was extremely impressed by the presentations and inspired by the event – the best feedback that we could have hoped for. Here's to the 2010 conference and another inspiring day.

For information on the model and MCAIG: www.modelofcreativeability.com.

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