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## EP-MON-026 WHAT WE DO IS OUR HEALTH

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**Background:** Links between health and human activity are well established. Ancient Egyptians used recreation in dedicated temples to treat melancholias. Greek physicians prescribed employment as curative. By the nineteenth century occupation was part of formalised approaches to treatment of illness. No field of practice demonstrates duality of occupation as both treatment of illness and determinant of health more than mental health. As with modern public health, current approaches to mental health have roots in changing social conditions during the nineteenth century. Social responses to mental illness have moved through phases of incarceration, asylum and recently to community care, early intervention and prevention. As part of each of these phases, occupation has been punishment and reward, adjunct to physical and psychotherapies, craft and industrial therapy, creative and expressive, and organiser of daily routines.

**Objectives:** In this paper, we demonstrate that occupation, a driver of health and social development, is an important dimension of health promotion. We focus on ways in which occupational strategies can be included within models and frameworks aiming to promote mental health of individuals and communities.

**Underlying values and principles:** Mental health practice is interdisciplinary and shaped by principles outlined by the WHO. Inherent in this work are values related to equity and approaches of community development.

**Knowledge base/ Evidence base:** This work is underpinned by advances in occupational science and therapy, as evidenced in research findings, see Pollard, Sakellariou & Kronenberg (2008).

**Context of intervention/project/work:** Occupation, whether work, self care or leisure, is included in health systems internationally, for example, through occupational therapy, or ergotherapy. However, it does not always appear explicitly in recognised international health statements (Alma Ata; Ottawa Charter). Mental health is also viewed through cultural lenses of illness, deprivation through forces such as survival of trauma or social dislocation through war.

**Methods:** Using hermeneutic analysis of historical documents and witness accounts, we establish a timeline showing the role of occupation in treatment of mental illness and promotion of mental health. Hermeneutics involves the interpretation of existing and constructed texts. Texts in this study comprise health and public records, professional archives, and textbooks, particularly those with historical editions.

**Results and Conclusions:** This study demonstrates links between activities undertaken as part of daily life and interaction with mental health. Historical vignettes situate the meaning of occupation within cultural contexts, leading to a current picture of occupation and mental health within socio-political scenarios of health promotion and sustainable community action.

**References:** Pollard, N., Sakellariou, D. & Kronenberg, F. (2008). A political practice of occupational therapy. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone Elsevier

**Disclosure of Interest:** None declared