The Web of Silence
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Psychological Health and Safety in the Occupational Therapy Workplace
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This video includes a summary of the article written by Sandra E Moll (2014) entitled "The web of silence: a qualitative case study of early intervention and support for healthcare workers with mental ill-health". The study described in the article was conducted in a large, multi-site healthcare facility in an urban setting.

Data was obtained through interviews and an online survey. The study found common components that were identified by healthcare providers that lead to the typical response of silence and inaction in regards to mental health issues.

These components/barriers that lead to silence and inaction are:

- lack of timely access to supports,
- uncertainty in identifying mental health issues,
- stigma,
- discourse of professional competence,
- social tensions,
- workload pressures, and
- confidentiality expectations (Moll, 2014).

Moll found that these various barriers delayed the time it took for an individual to seek help when suffering from a mental illness.

Although the majority of participants agreed with the above barriers, there were some exceptions to this typical response of silence. The examples of exceptions that Moll provided were:

- supportive individuals,
- supportive teams, and
- organizational policies.

The information from this study is important for occupational therapists because it directly relates to them as healthcare providers. They experience mental illness firsthand, whether it is through their clients, colleagues or because they are personally experiencing it.

Wieclaw et al. (2006) found that there is a "strong and consistent association between employment in human service professions and the increased relative risk of affective and stress related disorders". Occupational Therapists need to be aware that mental illness does affect colleagues in their profession and that they are not invincible in their mental health. Despite having education in mental health,

occupational therapists continue to hold stigmatizing attitudes towards mental illness. This article points out that it is important for occupational therapists to support each other and develop a work environment that encourages early intervention. Leadership is needed "to communicate the importance of the issues, allocate sufficient resources for meaningful interventions, and demonstrate organizational commitment to change" (Moll, 2014).

RESOURCES

- Moll, S. E. (2011). Health-care workers who experience mental health issues presentation. Retrieved from: www.iwh.on.ca/system/files/plenaries/plenary_2011-01-25_smoll.pdf

- "You're not alone" photo. Retrieved from: http://www.studenttalkone2one.com/Assets/Images/PageTitles/youreNotAlone.png

- "Team work" photo. Retrieved from: http://www.streetwisesubbie.com/uploads/images/Cartoons/CommonPurpose.jpg

- "The web of silence and inaction in the workplace" diagram. Retrieved from: http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/14/138/figure/F1

REFERENCES

- Moll, S.E. (2014). The web of silence: A qualitative case study of early intervention and support for healthcare workers with mental ill-health. *BMC Public Health, 14*(138). doi:10.1186/1471-2458-14-138.

- Wieclaw, J., Agerbo, E., Mortensen, P.B., & Bonde, J. P. (2006). Risk of affective and stress related disorders among employees in human service providers. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 63*(5), 314-319.