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Driving Societal Change: Occupational Therapy, Health and Human Rights

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Introduction: Many UN and WHO documents assert the relationship between health and human rights. Both organizations acknowledge that addressing the right to health will require societal change to meet the needs of people who live in poverty, particularly women and girls. How can occupational therapists respond to this call to action? Learning Objectives: 1. Participants can access documents to argue the importance of: • Framing occupational rights as a human right • Gathering data on the human rights issues of local populations, communities and individuals • Designing curricula that respond to social, economic and health disparities and diversity • Educating students in activist occupational therapy • Producing graduates who enact principles of respect, tolerance and recognition (UNESCO, 2011) 2. Participants can defend: • Why occupational therapy must turn its attention to societal conditions that create ill-health and absence of occupational rights • The ethical basis of human and occupational rights • The need for new knowledge, such as capability theory (Nussbaum, 2011). Process: The starting point for this workshop is the vision created by the WFOT International Advisory Group: Human Rights - that every occupational therapy educational programme includes theory and practical education on enabling societal change to create more inclusive societies. Teaching Methods: Brief presentations with spaces for dialogue with the architects of this vision, and sharing of stories from the educators and therapists who are charged with responding to it. Workshop Outcomes: Participants and others will use documents that will be shared via the WFOT website, e.g. a bibliography, region-specific priorities, strategies and examples for societal change. References: Nussbaum. M. (2011). Creating capabilities: The human development approach. Cambridge: Belknap Press. UNESCO. (2011). Contemporary issues in human rights education. <http://www.hrea.org/> WFOT. (2006). Position statement on human rights. <http://www.wfot.com/>