

**FROM THE PARADOX OF MAGIC TO INVESTIGATION OF CLINIC: RESEARCH, CLINICAL PRACTICE AND OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY****DO PARADOXO DA MÁGICA À INVESTIGAÇÃO DA CLÍNICA: PESQUISA, CLÍNICA E TERAPIA OCUPACIONAL****DE LA PARADOJA DE LA MAGIA A LA INVESTIGACIÓN CLÍNICA: INVESTIGACIÓN, CLÍNICA Y TERAPIA OCUPACIONAL**

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This article aims to discuss about clinical and research trajectory of a professional, highlighting the training in Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method. For this method, the investigation of occupational therapy practice is the central axis is for the production of knowledge about the practice, searching for generalizations and theories that support this practice, to demystify what seems to be magical, incomprehensible and difficult to be transmitted. This essay presents designs of research in this direction. In the present scenario of scientific production growth, it is expected to submit questions valuing aspects of research in occupational therapy practice in Brazil, to stimulate debate about research and clinical practice, in a dialogue that gives to clinical and professional practice a prominent place for the academic and scientific productions.

**Descriptors:** Occupational Therapy; Research; Knowledge, attitudes and practice in Health area.

Este artigo tem como objetivo refletir sobre a trajetória clínica e de pesquisa, de uma profissional destacando a formação no Método Terapia Ocupacional Dinâmica. Para esse método, é na investigação do proceder em terapia ocupacional que se encontra o eixo central para a produção de conhecimentos sobre a prática, buscando por generalizações e teorias que sustentem essa prática, desmistificar o que parece mágica, incompreensível e difícil de ser transmitido. Neste ensaio, são apresentados delineamentos de pesquisas nessa direção. No cenário atual, de crescimento da produção científica, espera-se apresentar questionamentos valorizando aspectos da investigação da prática em terapia ocupacional no Brasil, que estimulem o debate acerca da pesquisa e da clínica, em um diálogo que dê à clínica e à prática profissional, um lugar de destaque para as produções acadêmicas e científicas.

**Descritores:** Terapia Ocupacional; Pesquisa; Conhecimentos, atitudes e prática em saúde.

Este artículo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre la trayectoria clínica y de investigación, de una profesional, destacando el entrenamiento en el Método Terapia Ocupacional Dinámica. Para este método, el proceder en la terapia ocupacional es el eje central es para la producción de conocimientos sobre la práctica, la búsqueda de generalizaciones y teorías que apoyan esta práctica, desmitificar lo que parece mágico, incompreensible y difícil de transmitir. En este ensayo, diseños de investigación se presentan en esta dirección. En el escenario actual, de crecimiento de la producción científica, se espera presentar preguntas valorando los aspectos de la investigación de la práctica en terapia ocupacional en el Brasil, que estimulen el debate a cerca de la investigación y la clínica, en un diálogo en el cuál la clínica y la práctica profesional, tenga un lugar destacado para las producciones académicas y científicas.

**Descriptores:** Terapia Ocupacional; Investigación; Conocimientos, actitudes y práctica en salud.

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## INTRODUCTION

To discuss the topic Research, Clinical Practice and Occupational Therapy, in a qualitative perspective, it is assumed that the researcher is the one who ensures the credibility in qualitative research, from his/her formation and attitudes that takes over the research work<sup>2</sup>.

Thus, in presenting a professional trajectory, it is highlighted how the training in Occupational Therapy Dynamics Method (MTOD in Portuguese), from the *Centro de Especialidades Terapia Ocupacional* (Occupational Therapy Specialty Center - CETO) was a turning point in clinical practice to be presented and a mark for research training.

The MTOD was built on a process of theory of technique, for which "from the observation and analysis of clinical phenomena, it is built generalizations that can provide theoretical explanations to support a theoretical and methodological framework that will turn again to the clinical practice"<sup>3</sup>(p. 647). Thus, it offered tools that taught to pass through the triadic relationship (therapist, target-subject and activities), from the uniqueness of each subject and to understand that it is through the investigation of this proceeding in occupational therapy that the central axis for the production of knowledge in the field is found.

From the beginning to the most recent productions of the CETO it is emphasizes the need to expand the most of the insights into this 'know-how about', the investigation of clinical intervention in a methodical way so that, as a consequence, there is feasibility of theoretical constructions<sup>4,5</sup>.

Thus, it delimits scientific attitude as emotional disposition and intellectual organization to meet the understanding of phenomena of nature and human being<sup>6</sup>, which is necessary for the professional/clinical researchers can walk a path to analyze both their results, although unique in each case, as the processes that led to these results by identifying what can be

accepted as explanation and generalized to other situations of clinical practice.

Another necessary way, however, lies in the scientific activity, which develops under specific rules, from theoretical and methodological contributions, also with the explicit objective of increasing generalization of the things of nature and man. Thus, several questions can be made to understand the phenomena and, depending on what one wants to know and the type of question to be asked the methodological design for the research will be organized.

With regard to the study of clinical practice, focusing on research in the conduct of occupational therapy to produce knowledge, aiming to reveal elements that can be generalized and subsequently transmitted - What are the questions that should be asked and what methodologies will meet us?

Thus, this article aims to reflect on the clinical and research trajectory of a professional highlighting training in Dynamic Occupational Therapy Method.

## METHOD

This article is based on the perspective of a reflection on Occupational Therapy associating knowledge, professional practice and reflections with the literature.

## OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, CLINICAL PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

It is proposed to start with a question on the importance of research from practice:

"...first, more important than defining a profession or discipline as a science is to invent practices that can be judged by third parties and this is undoubtedly in the range of the scholar, not of the studied discipline. Second, a question: how do occupational therapists study their practices"??<sup>7</sup> (p. 06)

Putting practice as the core of knowledge production means to get away from conceptions to which the practice is the result of applying theories, and that in Occupational Therapy is often translated into theories from other fields of knowledge.

"Inventing practices "is not a strange term for occupational therapists used to working with people in situations of personal and social exclusion. But putting them to the judgment of others to validate them or not, making them known and valued by the occupational therapy community or leaving them is not usual.

It is possible to question the scientific attitude of occupational therapists in their daily lives, but it is in the scientific activity that we can have a closer judgment of the needs of the field. However, this scientific activity cannot distance from occupational therapists and should also encourage the scientific attitude necessary for them to be contributors in practical research projects.

In the late 1980s, the American Occupational Therapy Association and the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTA/AOTF) commissioned a major research on what was possible to apprehend of the practice in Occupational Therapy from the content and clinical reasoning processes of professionals. From this question, all the methodological design of the research was focused on the meanings that occupational therapists offered their actions<sup>8</sup>. Professionals had to become researchers of their own practice and risk to clarify their understanding for colleagues, whether they were peers or researchers, in order to find out what was implicit, questioning it and modifying understandings and practices. This was a two-way road, because both operated in the direction of improving practice for the professionals and for the purposes of the research. Findings that became explicit can be systematized for a theoretical discussion of how the practice happens in Occupational Therapy.

This is a possible answer on how occupational therapists are investigating their practices. That research was, in a way, paradigmatic for the Occupational Therapy in the international scenario and many other publications emerged from it<sup>9-14</sup>.

In this reflection, however, it is highlighted what is put as the need for research in this field: to investigate both

which theoretical frameworks are used by occupational therapists in their process of construction of the problem and decision-making about how to act in practice and also which theoretical frameworks (models and methods) proposed in Occupational Therapy influence clinical reasoning<sup>9</sup>.

This type of research on how the practice happens is still incipient. Books on Occupational Therapy fundamentals offer a range of models and theoretical frameworks, but there are few studies that seek to understand how these references are present in practice.

An example can be found in research conducted to understand how the concept of volition of the Human Occupation Model was present both for understanding the motivation before a chronic illness as in the therapeutic process in occupational therapy. This research showed an unfavorable secondary outcome, because the occupational therapist who claimed to be working under the assumptions of Human Occupation Model showed an understanding on the volition of patients quite different from their understandings, and the authors had to highlight the lack of understanding this concept by the professional<sup>15</sup>.

Thus, several questions can be asked - Is it only for that professional? To what extent are the classifications of theoretical frameworks consistent with the practice? How and which concepts and theoretical ideas are incorporated by professionals in their practice? What context in? How should we understand the positivist, humanistic and historical-materialist models that still have been studied in initial training as well as their real significance for professionals? Moreover - Which theories are necessary? What is actually determining clinical decisions?

In addition, research on clinical reasoning have shown results that focus more in its shape - about the kind of thinking that is in action - than in what is questioned, evaluated and validated in practices performed by occupational therapists and the contents of these thoughts in order to understand which references are at stake<sup>9</sup>.

Given these issues, in the professional experience here mentioned, there has been search to build a more systematic investigation of the clinical practice that values the procedure modes of occupational therapists. In the author's master dissertation it was tried to understand how the pedagogical dimension was present in the thoughts and procedures of an occupational therapist<sup>16</sup>. In a literature review, occupational therapists who valued the educational dimension that is present in practice often stressed the importance of having educational approaches consistent with models of practice in occupational therapy. So, an occupational therapist who works under a psychoanalytical referential could not use an educational behavioral approach because his/her practice would not achieve the expected results<sup>16</sup>.

Again, we faced with studies that put the theoretical frameworks above the practice and little analyzed how educational activities were built in the therapeutic processes in occupational therapy.

As the focus of the work was to understand the educational actions from MTOD referential, we included in this review, studies published in the *Revista CETO*. For MTOD all procedures of the occupational therapist must be directed to the characteristics of the target-subject, and there is a composition between the educational action and therapeutic function. This seemed different from choosing a theoretical framework a priori, because the focus was on what was important to the target-subject.

"...it is in the process of teaching and learning activities in occupational therapy that the uniqueness of a daily life begins to be built: discoveries of new skills and abilities, of new tastes or even of old tastes, of projects that originate in the integration of the individual with himself/herself and that demand their integration with other individuals, for social"<sup>16</sup> (p. 44-45).

So with the question: "What can be learned from the process of reflection on the action explained in the narratives of an

occupational therapist, about the pedagogical dimension in occupational therapy procedures?" it was possible to delineate the research methodology in which an experienced occupational therapist, who worked with MTOD, produced written narratives over ten sequential visits with a teenage female patient with schizophrenia, in which she described the events of the sessions as well as her reflections on them.

After an analysis on the different types of reflection of the occupational therapist, we found that the pedagogical dimension was present during the diagnosis process and also when she described actions and reflections in order to try to understand how the patient learned, focused both in here-and-now of the session as in previous moments and in daily information; added to consequences of her actions from these understandings and in the circumstances for the conduction of the therapeutic process. Thus, it became possible to find consistency between the assumptions of MTOD and the practice of the occupational therapist, as regards the centrality of the educational activity in conducting the therapeutic process.

In the doctoral research<sup>17</sup> of the same professional, whose objective was to understand clinical reasoning processes and professional development for occupational therapists beginning their careers, field work was carried out along with a group of six professionals at the beginning of their careers and two experienced collaborators of the project. The process, as well as in clinical reasoning research of AOTA/AOTF, was to turn them into researchers of their own practice in order to produce senses about it and reveal implicit aspects<sup>18</sup>. In a meeting of the group, when they were discussing how to validate the work of the occupational therapist, or yet, how to explain occupational therapy so that it is understood, one of the participants reported the charming speech of their non-occupational therapists colleagues before her work, as if validating the result, but using magic to understand it.

*"I think there is all these features, [...] that it's not what it's seen as traditional,*

*scientific, what is valid, that gives the result that perhaps society expects [...] someone says 'wow , the magic suitcase' [materials case], [...] it seems that you open the case, enchant everyone, because I think there is also the difficulty to understand how it happens, [...] there's a lot to do with a relationship, [...] on the other hand I think we also get in, [...] in a place that scares to say it is not so, because if it isn't this, [...], and now, right?"*

*"That is the paradox of magic, [...] if it's magic is an illusion, it is not, but it makes looking like it is, it's something you do not understand what's behind, but that [...] produces a result [...]"*

A result of this research was to uncover one of the biggest dilemmas of occupational therapists beginning their careers, and in which it is risked the reflection on if it is not constituted as a dilemma of the profession, is putting up in public and own words, other than those borrowed from biomedical or psychological knowledge, the reasons of their procedures and processes involved in cases of success or failure<sup>19</sup>.

In this direction, the production of knowledge from practice should not be restricted to pragmatism as it can/should search for generalizations and theories to support this practice. In this sense, they take a place like science, to demystify what is magical, incomprehensible and difficult to be transmitted.

The complexity of practice in occupational therapy, even with all the magic and poetry inherent in it - as can be seen in the description of the anthropologist who, observing us notes that *"There was more generosity than I was prepared for. I saw small kindnesses rather than life-saving interventions. [...]"*<sup>19</sup> (p. 22) that *"I could not ignore these women or the femininity of their concerns with details of everyday life [...] There is a certain fluidity in this practice, from the ridiculous to the sublime, from the trivial to the essential [...]"*<sup>19</sup> (p. 51) – demands to be put as an object of study in academic and scientific research that makes it intelligible and capable of generalizations.

This way of producing knowledge is based on the constructions on the modern sciences in which uncertainty is the mark of field science, and that to understand the object the subject needs to invent ways of investigating able to gather evidence and to identify relationships that make the object intelligible<sup>7,20</sup>.

Occupational therapy (practice), put as an object of study, involves the occupational therapist (researcher) in the invention of research practices that provide opportunities (open to the risk) of apprehension/understanding "of human conditions of interventions in the event of a occupational therapy"<sup>7(p.6)</sup> of phenomena relating to the know-how about the occupational therapy.

## CONCLUSION

With these reflections, it is expected the demarcation that the knowledge produced in this type of research has to be relevant to practice.

This intelligibility (producing knowledge from uncertainty and new ways to invent practice) is distinguished from a trivial opinion and does not become vulnerable to any trivial opinion – although it makes room for vulnerability - is the possibility of putting to test of third parties this mode of investigating.

Occupational therapy is 'made to existence' by the occupational therapist investigating it and this mode of knowing is different from the one that aims to prove an existence.

This proposal of knowledge production demands a research practice to learn and understand other practice, the care practice. This experience of caring is produced by occupational therapists, which makes them part and parcel of any investigation.

In the current scenario, of growth of scientific production in Occupational Therapy in Brazil, it is expected, with this essay, to present issues that highlight aspects of the research in occupational therapy practice and that stimulate debate about research and clinical practice, in a dialogue

that gives the clinical and professional practice an important place for the academic and scientific production.

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**Tais Quevedo Marcolino** was responsible for the construction and wording of article.