



Podcast transcript:

Conversations from Conference

Intro

Vox pops :

'I'm looking forward to networking with other OTs to find out what's going on in their areas'

'I'm delighted to see what's going on in UK and around the world as well'

'I'm just excited about everything, the programme is really different this year with the new ways of working so I'm really looking forward to that one but there's loads of new stuff this year, that's what's really great '

Hello & introductions. Today's episode was recorded at Conference where we caught up with a few members who were nice enough to let us tag along with them to a few sessions. You'll be hearing from one of our student members:

I'm Ben Choi from the University of Brighton

An occupational therapist working in Motor Neurone Disease:

My name's Suzanne Simpson and I'm an occupational therapist at the Walton Centre which is based in Liverpool

A lecturer in occupational therapy:

I am Simone Coetzee and I am a lecturer at the University of Essex

And a community-based occupational therapist working in stroke, who is also a Health and Work Champion:

My name's Elizabeth Field I'm an occupational therapist in Cornwall

Dan – it was your 1st time at Conference how did you find it?

Dan S to give impressions of 1st time at Conference.

There was one topic which kept coming up in all our conversations

Multiple voices: social prescribing... social prescribing... social prescribing... social prescribing is what everybody's talking about...

So lots of interest on topic of social prescribing! DS Attended session 29, Paul Cooper's session on Social Prescribing with Suzanne Simpson...



SS:

[00:01:14] My name's Suzanne Simpson and I'm an occupational therapist at the Walton Centre which is based in Liverpool and I've actually quite recently moved into quite a new role so I'm funded by the MND. association motor neurone disease. Yeah yeah yeah. And I basically we're looking at improving the psychological well-being of people living with MND. And that's kind of brought me in to the social prescribing world.

DS:

So obviously this session that you just attended was on social prescribing . See that's an interesting sort of an area of interest for you but what were your initial thoughts on that session.

SS:

[00:02:32] ~~M. I've said~~ very well done. It was obviously popular. We didn't only just fill the space there were people outside as well so it's obviously a subject that a lot of OTs are interested in. I think Paul really introduced sort of what the messages are from the Royal College and Sarah kindly told us the history of how Salford University got involved in social prescribing which is quite interesting.

[00:03:00] And certainly I think she posed a few questions to the audience I think especially the one around the fact that OTs don't own occupation.

[00:03:09] I was waiting for a few gasps in the audience because when it comes to social prescribing I think I initially when it was around when it was first mentioned, I was one of those OTs that how dare they? That's occupational therapy. But actually in the real I'm doing now my view of social prescribing is completely changed in that I'm a real advocate for it. So the whole session was kind of I was sat in the front row nodding and smiling because I do agree with the Royal College we should be embracing it and taking the opportunities.

DD:

It's interesting to hear Suzanne address that – we know from speaking to members and conversation on social – lots on occupational therapists do feel that way and are concerned that it's being medicalised and perhaps taken away from occupational therapists. We asked RCOT's Paul Cooper about this:

PC:

Describes clearly and concisely how this is happening anyway, how OTs need to get on board or get left behind, how link workers are not doing OTs jobs and how they can work together.



DD: Simone also felt that presents an opportunity for OTs to proactively get involved and promote the value of OT :

I think it's been a massive wakeup call for us as OTs to really get off our backs and go out and tell people what we do. But I think we also need to be having very important conversations now in its early phases about how to reclaim that and how to get into those GP practices and make job roles for ourselves in there

GPs are quite open to us being there and I think with the whole movement towards individual individual budgets and personal budgets that the doors have already been opened for us to go in and be much more involved in GP practices and contortions. But I really think that we need to be much more proactive about kind of making roles for ourself in there. So we were just talking earlier about trying to find placement roles but then practices even when there's no OT there. But just to to kind of say well these are the benefits of having an occupational therapist in your practice would have for you.

DS:

I spoke to Susanne about what she will be doing on a practical level to progress her work in this area

SS:

I think it's made me want to connect more with OTs So within that session there was an OT behind me was talking about GP hubs and how GP is really getting occupational therapist do and wanting to roll that out. So I think what I've taken away from it is I'm not the only one I think. Amanda Peacock was another OT who has spoken today about social prescribing and she was saying the same you kind of feel like you're the only ones. But actually there's lots of pockets of OTs that are doing it or trying to get involved with it. So I think what I've taken away is. Reach out a little bit more and find out more about what OTs are doing out there.

Twitter is an amazing thing . This conference I'm connecting to people that I've met on Twitter. So spoke to Amanda Peacock. Like I say he's doing loads around he's talked about research in social prescribing.

So OTs in innovative roles and social prescribing personalized care I would say was kind of the hot topics at the moment

DD:

There was a lot of interest in new and emerging areas of practice. I was excited to join Simone Coetzee for an occupational station about occupation as protest which looked at how occupations can be used clinically to protest and promote occupational justice.



[00:00:14] So I am Simone Coetzee and I am a lecturer at the University of Essex and I run the pre registration masters program there.

It was really nice to see that ~~on the on the schedule here on the program~~ because I haven't seen anything like that on the program before ~~and actually I've never managed to get into one of those occupation stations before so it was really nice to be there~~ and to be thinking particularly I have, I'm still thinking about the stuff that we looked at at the WFOT conference last year and how powerful that was and really thinking about how we can include a lot of that kind of radical thinking into both teaching occupational therapy and Clinical Practice.

[00:01:54] So it was really nice to just sort of sit there and listen to this. Kind of talk discussion about protests in different ways but how we're being given permission to do it really. Not that we need permission but actually OTs are quite a passive lot generally. But as we have these real you know kind of passionate lives and creative lives and we should be doing more with that. Yeah.

~~Well I think can really be inspired about and trying to though some very I'm I'm I'm very~~ passionate about environmental justice linking with occupational justice and.

[00:06:03] That kind of. By promoting those three just the social justice occupational justice and environmental justice is really part of our job and we actually should be doing all three.

[00:06:16] I mean that we're very good at occupational justice and that we can do that because that's the tools of our trade but we cannot have occupation or life without the kind of environmental aspect of it. And I and I really feel that I'd like to be looking much more at how occupational therapists can push in all the organizations that we work in to be challenging the kind of waste that there is in in in kind of big organizations and and be thinking about building environmental thinking into all of our practice into our teaching.

[00:07:01] So that's one thing that I'd like to be thinking more about. And then also on much more of a person orientated level looking at. So I work with students.

[00:07:12] I don't really see sort of service users anymore but from working with students and kind of understanding the challenges that they have and and the passions that they have and then trying to work collaboratively with them collaboratively with them because I think again that collective voice is much stronger than students saying one thing. And then being kind of a lone voice in the crowd and us thinking about how we can kind of.

[00:07:43] Make protest constructive and transformative and peaceful but make it better and make it relevant.

DS: So – while we're talking about students and future practice– I spent some time chatting to one of our student delegates about how he is feeling about the future of the profession...



I'm Ben Choi from the University of Brighton and I'm almost finished, I've almost finished my master's in occupational therapy which is a two year condensed course.

[00:21:38] ~~Honestly just really grateful to be here.~~ I'm on the last Masters cohort to be funded by the NHS.

I think we're already setting quite a positive future. To be honest with you. I believe we're one of the few professions that aren't severely affected by the whole robotics and taking over professions sort of stuff. And so I think we're already in a fairly good position going forward. I think we need to be more assertive in MDT teams from my experiences on placement.. Yes multidisciplinary teams just because. Like I said from my experience I've seen that's not the case so much. I think naturally a lot of occupational therapists we kind of sit back a little bit and sometimes are happy for others to take the lead but I think maybe a bit more assertiveness and a bit more leadership and more of a push on that side of stuff. Mm hmm. And I think would benefit us massively as a profession. Mm hmm. Definitely.

DD: It's interesting, that point about leadership keeps coming up. We actually did a whole podcast on it recently. It feels like occupational therapists are ready and wanting to lead which was something that Suzanne Rastrick encouraged in her opening plenary.

Suzanne Rastrick:

[44:50] You have a vital role to play in the unfolding destiny of the world, dear occupational therapists. What will it be for you? I want to introduce you to my last AHP voice – Tom Whelton. Tom is a diagnostic radiographer from Lancashire whose lived experience includes being diagnosed with sudden death syndrome at the age of 20... he came to my conference for the 1st time last June and narrated that. And Tom offers a really pithy thinking on certain things and I want to leave you if I may with a particular thought of Tom's, which to me epitomises leadership and how I want you to respond to what I've said this morning. So, in Tom's words, the future is now, we are it. No one else. Just you. Don't wait for anyone else to do it. So, dear occupational therapists, get going please.

DS:

Back to Suzanne Simpson here:

SS:

I suppose picking up on what Suzanne talked about this morning and I'm a big believer in this now is around a thing for the profession it's now about leadership and it's about OTs standing up and shouting more, rocking more boats. And selling ourselves – we're not good at it



[00:15:00] And I know I'm not gonna say I get in a room and I get whole imposter syndrome and I think what am I doing here. But actually it's about driving everything forward and taking people with you. Suzanne really hit the nail on the head. It's about nurturing others. And what I really love about being an OT and now being in a role as a band 7 is I want to. Hopefully infect other people in that drive. And that, come on, we're OTs and we can do anything and I am. I probably have got rose tinted glasses and I probably do think pie in the sky ideas but I think unless I really aim for the ideal then what am I'm striving for? ~~and I think that's what I love to see in other OTs. So you see it with people like Jenny Preston you see it in Suzanne and you see it in Diane Cox and all these amazing OTs who in their time have really challenged things have shouted have not been quietened down. And I think we need to learn from them.~~ So yeah I think for the profession now is the time to lead. You know everybody's saying it. Everybody's talking our language so let's lead. Let's show people how it's done and take them with us and support them to do it as well. So yeah I'd say that's leadership this is what's key to the profession at the moment.

DD: While we're talking about leadership, I met up with one of RCOT's Health and Work Champions to attend Genevieve Smyth's session on this project... we caught up by phone after Conference to have a chat about this...

EF:

My name's Elizabeth Field I'm an occupational therapist in Cornwall. I work with the stroke and neurology therapy service in the community seeing people with stroke longer term and my colleagues see people with stroke and neurological conditions. And in addition to my therapy role I've also taken on the volunteer role as a health and world champion.

The project if people aren't aware of it. It's led by Gen Smyth from the RCOT and it's all about good work for good health and supporting our colleagues in health care and also now in social care to be aware of the relationship between good work and good health and to be aware of the risks of someone being either in unhelpful unhealthy work or of struggling and maybe becoming out of work or perhaps not even having the opportunity to experience the benefits of good work for good health. So it's a very far reaching project in its consequences in its potential to have an impact and and be of benefit.

DD:

Elizabeth shared some of her thoughts on Gen's session with me:

I was thrilled that it was so well supported. It was great to hear. I mean there was one person who spoke out who's working with young people with dementia specifically trying to help them back into work or to remain in their jobs. It was great to hear from that person. ~~There were a couple of other champions. Well at least two other champions as well as myself~~



~~present I don't know if there were any other present undercover as it were. And yeah it was it was a good session also.~~

[00:04:51] I mean I've I met Jen only last week in Cornwall and even just coming to that extra session in the conference I still once again learnt new things. I found out that you know we're now far more explicitly involving our colleagues in social care which when I was first involved with the project we were far more sort of healthcare focussed and now we're just embracing the whole the whole community of people who can get on board with this project and support this agenda of good work for good health.

[00:05:29] Yeah and and also an. Just hearing about the opportunities for local leadership for occupational therapists to lead in this area in the you know in their local services or in their local organizations and the career development opportunities that are coming out of this this project and the way people are developing it locally. Well that was very uplifting as well. For the project but for occupational therapy.

DD:

Elizabeth explained how the Health and Work Champions role has given her a tangible way to lead within her trust

EF:

I know just speaking informally to people who who've been involved with the project it has raised their profile it has given a specific identity that that then has leverage. I think once you've got a profile and a name for and some visibility for leading in one area then people recognize the skills and want to hand you other pieces of work and say What can you do with this. Which is really exciting. You know you don't have to be then typecast within the vocational rehab role. It's there are other projects that are related that people will want the skills and the enthusiasm that we bring to one thing they will want that for that for the other priorities for the other organizational issues and agendas.

DS:

It's been a really packed couple of days, but we have seen some key themes coming out of our conversations, definitely social prescribing and an interest in new and innovative ways of working.

DD:

And , of course, leadership. Conference ended with some words from RCOT's Chief Executive Julia Scott

JS:



I know that doing what we do is sometimes a thankless task. But on days like that, I want you to think about the growing recognition there is of your work, of your contribution to the wellbeing of care and support of those in need of our specialist services. And speaking of specialist services, I wonder if it's time for us to expect other to know something of what occupational therapists do. ~~Given the impact of the Improving Lives Saving Money campaign, and given the fact that every time I introduce myself as an occupational therapist, people now respond saying 'oh, my sister, my nephew, my brother is an occupational therapist', or 'oh my father, my child, my friend received support from an occupational therapist'. Can we not reasonable claim that the profession has come of age and it is not only known, but valued?~~ Of course not everyone will completely understand the application of occupational therapy skills across all our fields of intervention, but do they need to? Is it enough that they know something of occupational therapy?... I do wonder if it's time for us to declare 'I am an occupational therapist' with a bit more confidence and assertion and assume that people will know something of what we do. A little confidence can go a long way and is it time that we all spent some time creating 5 or 6 'I am' statements. Is it time we worked on us being more assertive about what we do? Dictionary.com defines an assertion as a positive statement or declaration without support or reason. I can live with that. I urge you to try it.

DS: Thanks to everyone who took part in today's episode, especially to our interviewees Ben Choi, Simone Coetzee, Elizabeth Field and Susanne Simpson. If you have any thoughts on the topics we've discussed, or any ideas for what you'd like to hear in upcoming episodes, you can contact us on any of our social channels using the hashtag #RCOTpodcast

We're taking a break from Conference next year to conduct a review. Remember to give your feedback here...

Vox pops: what people have learned:

[05:00] *'I enjoyed Alice Hortops' talk because she made me think about the importance of solitary activity and why that sometimes might be really helpful for people rather than encouraging them to socialise more'*

'I've enjoyed it very much indeed, I've found it informative, I've found it to be entertaining and even at times a bit inspirational.'

'For me, the best bit's actually been meeting people, meeting colleagues that I know from online, or I know their work from research or articles. Just that networking and connection with other OTs has been the best bit of conference to me.'

Outro music.



End