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Profile: Lecturer in Occupational Therapy at Glasgow Caledonian University; occupational therapist for 15 years

**Title: Consultant Occupational Therapists in the United Kingdom**

Background: For over a decade, occupational therapists have been able to progress to Consultant level within the NHS in the United Kingdom. The Consultant role was introduced to provide a similar career structure to that of medics thus seeking to retain the most experienced and expert practitioners in clinical practice. Traditionally, career progression for occupational therapists meant moving into management, education or research. The Consultant role was a policy-driven aim of the UK governments, across the four nations, to improve the health and wellbeing of service users whilst providing an improved career structure for occupational therapists as well as nurses, midwives and other allied health professionals. Arguably, as the most experienced and clinical experts within the profession, Consultant Occupational Therapists should be our key innovators of change and development. These ideas are explored further in this paper.

Format: Lecture

Aim: To provide a critical overview of the development of the 'Consultant' Occupational Therapist role within the NHS in the United Kingdom and to outline the authors current research in this area.

Objectives: To set the context by outlining the current career framework for Occupational Therapists in the United Kingdom. To describe the policy context that led to the development of Consultant Occupational Therapist roles within the wider context of Nursing, Midwifery and Allied Health Professions. To describe the demographics of the Consultant Occupational Therapist population and consider their impact to improving the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. To provide an analysis of current literature regarding the development and evaluation of the Consultant role and consider implications for the future. To provide an outline of the authors current research in this area.

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