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Occupational Therapy in Rehabilitation the State of Practice and Education in the Czech Republic

Abstract:

Occupational therapy is a healthcare field that focuses mainly on functional diagnostics regarding the activities of daily life (ADL), and, to this end, proposes occupational therapy interventions, including the prescription of assistive devices and the evaluation of living spaces with proposals for facilitation devices. Another objective of occupational therapy is a focus on the functional abilities of the upper extremities, especially the function of the hand, which is linked to cognitive functions. Occupational therapists perform cognitive behavioural training under the supervision of a clinical psychologist, and they also focus on prevocational rehabilitation in order to achieve the optimal quality of life for a person with a disability.

According to statistics published by COTEC (Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries, 2013), a total of 290 study programs approved by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) and another 93 not approved by WFOT are available in the field of occupational therapy in 26 European countries and outside the European Union. Most schools are located in Germany and Great Britain. Since the individual European countries use different school systems, these study programmes also differ in some aspects. The study programmes are offered at higher education institutions, universities, polytechnic schools and professional colleges.

In the Czech Republic, occupational therapists get their education in the three-year bachelor's programme, and a new master's degree program will be offered in September 2014. The bachelor's study has been available in the Czech Republic since 1992. At present, a total of four universities in the Czech Republic offer education for healthcare specialization with a bachelor's degree course in occupational therapy. This field can be studied at the First Faculty of Medicine at Charles University in Prague, the Faculty of Health Studies at the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň, the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ostrava and the Faculty of Health Studies at the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem. The programmes involve full-time study at most of the schools, while at the Faculty of Health Studies at the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem it is also available as a distance-learning programme.

Keywords: education in occupational therapy, occupational therapy, occupational therapist

Introduction

Occupational therapy is a healthcare field that focuses mainly on functional diagnostics regarding the activities of daily life (ADL), and, to this end, proposes occupational therapy interventions, including the prescription of assistive devices and the evaluation of living spaces with proposals for facilitation devices. Occupational therapists focus on functional abilities of the upper limbs, primarily the function of the hand. Occupational therapists perform cognitive behavioural training and they also focus on prevocational rehabilitation in order to achieve the optimal quality of life for a person with a disability¹.

Occupational therapy in the Czech Republic has a long and complex history. The year 1913, when Prof. Rudolf Jedlička, a university professor at the Faculty of Medicine, Charles University in Prague, founded the Jedlička Institute, is considered a milestone in the establishment of occupational therapy in the Czech Republic. Professor Jedlička founded thirty-two practical workshops in the Institute, so that people with disabilities, especially war veterans, could obtain “gainful employment” and become once again contributing members of society. Masters of various trades (predecessors of occupational therapists) started working in these workshops and performed “prevocational rehabilitation” as they tried to determine their clients’ abilities and guide them to specific vocational fields. Later, during the 1920s and 1930s, more workshops were established for individuals with disabilities. In the healthcare sector, however, the most frequently used activities were occupational treatment, mainly in psychiatric institutes. For example, the Institute of Psychiatry in Prague, which was established in 1909, employed nuns as nurses, and they worked together with the Institute’s clients to raise animal and crops, weave carpets and operate woodworking or pottery workshops. Hence, this “occupational treatment” partially served to finance the operation of the Institute. During the Second World War, the Jedlička Institute was expanded to include prosthetic workshops. The post-war period facilitated the formation of occupational therapy, and this subject started being taught at secondary nursing schools for health rehabilitation workers and nurses. In the 1970s, a postgraduate degree in occupational therapy was available for students who had completed their physiotherapy degree. Later, special schools (secondary) were established to prepare students after the completion of primary education to serve as occupational therapists in a three-year study programme. Then in 1992, a three-year bachelor’s education programme was established at the university level with the help of the EU Tempus Phare project at the First Faculty

¹ O. Svestkova, K. Svecena, *Ergoterapie, Skripta pro studenty bakalárskeho oboru ergoterapie na 1. lekárske fakulte Univerzity Karlovy. The textbook for students of bachelour programme – occupational therapy at the 1st Medical Faculty of Charles University, Praha, Univerzita Karlova Praha, 1. lekárska fakulta, 2013, p. 199*

of Medicine, Charles University in Prague; this year, in 2014, we managed to obtain accreditation for a two-year master's degree programme in occupational therapy at the First Faculty of Medicine, Charles University in Prague, and this study will begin in the 2014/15 academic year. At present, a total of four universities in the Czech Republic offer education for healthcare specialization with a bachelor's degree course in occupational therapy. This field can be studied at the First Faculty of Medicine at Charles University in Prague, the Faculty of Health Studies at the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň, the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Ostrava and the Faculty of Health Studies at the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem. The programmes involve full-time study at most of the schools, while at the Faculty of Health Studies at the University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem it is also available as a distance-learning programme.

The study of occupational therapy in the world

Occupational therapists in developed countries around the world are educated at secondary schools or universities. In the Czech Republic, occupational therapists are non-medical healthcare professionals with a university degree. They earn a bachelor's degree at universities and, in 2016, we will have the first graduates from occupational therapy with a master's degree.

According to statistics published by COTEC (Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries, 2013), a total of 290 occupational therapy study programs approved by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) and another 93 not approved by WFOT are available in 26 European countries and outside the European Union. Most schools are located in Germany and Great Britain. Since the individual European countries use different school systems, these study programmes also differ in some aspects. Most countries have their own system for the accreditation of study programs. Implemented within the European system of higher education, the "Bologna Process" aims to establish a uniform system of higher education divided into three main stages: bachelor, master and doctoral studies².

In order for a programme to be approved by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, the school must meet the WFOT Minimum standards for the education of occupational therapists, which were last revised in 2002. In addition to the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, there are also other organizations overseeing education in Europe, including COTEC (Council of Occupational

² European Commission, Education and Training, Supporting education and training in Europe and beyond, *The Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area* [online], last update 22/04/2014, [cit. 2014-04-26], available from: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en.htm

Therapists for the European Countries) and ENOTHE (European Network of Occupational Therapy in Higher Education), and they also issue guidelines and standards for education programmes, educational ethics and quality assurance³.

In Great Britain, the first European school of occupational therapy was opened in 1930⁴. In order for an applicant in the Great Britain to become an occupational therapist, they must complete a pre-registration study program at one of 32 universities⁵. Different levels of study are available: the lowest level is a full-time BSc degree that takes 3 years (4 years in Scotland), a part-time BSc degree and in-service BSc degree with four-year attendance twice a week. Other programmes are two-year postgraduate forms, wherein the graduates receive the Post-graduate Diploma in Occupational Therapy, or a master's degree (Master of Science in Occupational Therapy). All occupational therapy study programmes in Great Britain are accredited by the College of Occupational Therapists. This accreditation is voluntary and is recognized by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists. Therefore, the qualification of graduates from these schools is recognized in more than 60 countries. Study programmes must meet minimum standards and be approved by the Health and Care Professions Council. In addition to traditional forms and concepts of study programmes, a form based on Problem-Based Learning is also used in Great Britain, for example at the University of Brighton⁶.

In the United States, a total of 226 lower grade courses are available (OTA – Occupational Therapy Assistant, a worker in science, perhaps something like a bachelor's degree in Europe), as well as 166 master's degree programs, and 19 doctoral programs in occupational therapy. The study is organized in the traditional week format, and it is also available in the evening, weekend or combined forms. The study and work of an occupational therapist in the individual countries is governed by different licensing rules applicable in the respective country⁷.

³ Tuning project, Tuning Educational Structures in Europe, Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Occupational Therapy, Printed in Spain, © Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto, 2008

⁴ Tuning project, Tuning Educational Structures in Europe, Reference Points for the Design and Delivery of Degree Programmes in Occupational Therapy, Printed in Spain, © Publicaciones de la Universidad de Deusto, 2008

⁵ COT. Occupational Therapy Career Handbook 2014-2015 [online], College of Occupational Therapists 2014, [cit. 2014-04-16], available from: http://www.cot.co.uk/sites/default/files/marketing_materials/public/Career-Handbook-2014-15.pdf

⁶ University of Brighton, School of Health professions, *Occupational Therapy*, © University of Brighton, 2014, available from: <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/sohp/prospective/occupational-therapy/>

⁷ AOTA, Academic Programs Annual Data Report, Academic Year 2013-2014 [online], prepared by: Division of Academic and Scientific Affairs, American Occupational Therapy Association, © 2014, [cit. 2014-04-16, available from: <http://www.aota.org/-/media/Corporate/Files/EducationCareers/Accredit/2013-2014-Annual-Data-Report.pdf>

In the USA, as evidenced by some studies, many schools employ the teaching approach based on Problem-Based Learning for education of occupational therapists, including the University of New Mexico⁸ and Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia⁹.

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. Since 2008, this association awards accreditation only to those study programmes that lead to a master's degree. At present, occupational therapy can be studied at 14 universities in Canada¹⁰. Students must have completed a bachelor's degree, wherein no branch specialization is required; however, it is necessary to complete courses in some basic scientific branch such as anatomy, physiology, psychology or sociology¹¹. For example, at McMaster University, a bachelor's programme that qualifies the graduate to continue with the master's degree study in occupational therapy is Bachelor of Health Sciences¹². The study programme at McMaster University is based on Problem-Based Learning¹³. Western University in Ontario offers a two-year master's degree programme as well as another interesting form – a combined study to earn the Master's (MScOT) and PhD degrees. The study takes five years and is designed so that the student focuses on the PhD programme during the first two years and on the master's degree programme during the next two years. After four years of study, the student reaches the MScOT degree, and completes the PhD programme in the fifth year¹⁴.

European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy

European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy is a unique study program with the participation of several foreign universities: Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Amsterdam University of Applied Science, University College Sjælland,

⁸ B. Vanleit, *Using the Case Method to Develop Clinical Reasoning Skills in Problem-Based Learning*, „The American Journal of Occupational Therapy” 1995, Vol. 49, n. 4, p. 349–353

⁹ D. E. Watson, D. J. West, *Using problem-based learning to improve educational outcomes*, „Occupational Therapy International” 1996, Vol. 3, n. 2, p. 81–93

¹⁰ COT, *Occupational Therapy Career Handbook 2014-2015* [online], College of Occupational Therapists 2014, [cit. 2014-04-16], available from: http://www.cot.co.uk/sites/default/files/marketing_materials/public/Career-Handbook-2014-15.pdf

¹¹ McMaster University, *Admission Requirements* [online], © 2008, McMaster University, [cit. 2014-04-26], available from: <http://www.schoolofrehabilitationsscience.ca/Admissionsnbsp/OTPT/AdmissionRequirements/tabid/533/Default.aspx>

¹² McMaster University, *Health Sciences* [online], copyright 2011, McMaster University, [cit. 2014-04-26], available from: <http://future.mcmaster.ca/programs/healthsci/>

¹³ McMaster University, *Master of Science: Occupational Therapy Program: Curriculum Guide 2013-2014* [online], McMaster University, Health Sciences, in collaboration with the Northern Ontario School of Medicine, 2013, [cit. 2014-04-10], available from: <http://www.srs-mcmaster.ca/Portals/20/pdf/OT%20Tutors/OT%20Curriculum%20Guide%202013.pdf>

¹⁴ Western Health Sciences, *School of Occupational Therapy, programs* [online], © 1878–2013 Western University, [cit. 2014-04-26], available from: <http://www.uwo.ca/fhs/ot/programs/index.html>

Naestved (School of Occupational Therapy), Karolinska Institutet, Department of Neurobiology Health Care Sciences and Society, Division of Occupational Therapy and the University of Brighton, School of Health professions, Division of Occupational Therapy. One of the first master's programmes in Europe, this programme has been opened since 1999¹⁵.

This study programme is divided into six modules, each of them taking place at one of the participating institutions. The last module is completed by the participants in their own country, where they conduct their own research for their thesis. Each module consists of 280 lessons, but the first 56 hours are devoted to the preparation of students in their own country. This is followed by a ten-day course (80 hours) in one of the host countries, and in the end all students again spend time in self-study in their own country (200 hours). Students work on their final thesis in their own country. The costs of the study are significant: the overall tuition fee is EUR 13,700, and additional costs are associated with travel and accommodation in host countries. The specified requirements for admission to the study include completed bachelor's studies at a school that is recognized by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists and international English language exam¹⁶.

The study of occupational therapy in the Czech Republic

At present, bachelor's degree programmes in the field of occupational therapy are available in the Czech Republic. Since 2004, in relation to the accession of the Czech Republic to the European Union, education of occupational therapists was terminated at professional nursing colleges (secondary schools), and since 2005 study may take place only in the context of higher education¹⁷.

In the Czech Republic, the bachelor's degree course in occupational therapy prepares graduates to acquire professional competence for the profession of occupational therapist in accordance with the act regulating the requirements for the acquisition and recognition of qualifications for non-medical professions and activities related to the provision of healthcare (Non-Medical Healthcare Professions Act) This study course must meet the requirements specified in the decree laying down the requirements for the activities of healthcare and other

¹⁵ Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Prospective students, *European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy* [online], © 2013 Hogeschool van Amsterdam, [cit. 2014-03-16], available from: <http://www.ot-euromaster.nl/prospective-students-2/>

¹⁶ Hogeschool van Amsterdam, Prospective students, *European Master of Science in Occupational Therapy* [online], © 2013, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, [cit. 2014-03-16], available from: <http://www.ot-euromaster.nl/prospective-students-2/>

¹⁷ M. Tichy, *Uvodni slovo doc. Tichého, Zpravodaj*, Introductory Word doc. Tichy, Newsletter [online], Univerzita J. E. Purkyne v Usti nad Labem, 2012, cislo 4, [cit. 2014-03-14], available from: <http://www.ujep.cz/cz/podle-uzivatele/pro-absolventy/zpravodaj/archiv.html>

professionals, and, at the same time, it meets the requirements of the decree laying down the minimum requirements for study programmes to acquire proficiency for the performance of non-medical healthcare professions.

At present, a total of four universities in the Czech Republic offer full-time study in the bachelor's program of occupational therapy, and one also offers a combined type of study. These are the following universities: First Faculty of Medicine, Charles University in Prague, University of Ostrava, University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Usti nad Labem and the University of West Bohemia in Plzeň. First Faculty of Medicine, Charles University in Prague, where the Bachelor's programme of study was approved in 2002¹⁸, is the only institution from the Czech Republic mentioned in the list of study programmes approved by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

The study programme in occupational therapy at the First Faculty of Medicine, Charles University in Prague was prepared in cooperation with foreign schools that train professionally educated occupational therapists, within the TEMPUS PHARE project (1992–1998) funded by the European Union. The following three large, historically significant facilities with a tradition in the field of occupational therapy participated in this project: Hogeschool van Amsterdam, School of Health and Life Sciences at Glasgow Caledonian University, Faculty of Medicine, Lund University. These institutions worked closely with the First Faculty of Medicine, Charles University in creating the study programme of occupational therapy, and representatives of these institutions also directly participated in teaching. All Czech teachers who taught occupational therapists were actively involved in teaching at the above-named institutions and participated in joint educational seminars, courses and conferences.

The First Faculty of Medicine, Charles University in Prague is a member of ENOTHE. Founded in Denmark in 1995, ENOTHE is an organization representing the education of occupational therapists in Europe and which is open to all European educational institutions and professional organizations of occupational therapists¹⁹.

A graduate in occupational therapy is proficient in investigative functional diagnostics and therapeutic procedures in the field of occupational therapy, which can be applied at life-saving departments in various clinical fields and also as part of an inter-professional team in the area of social services.

The study plan of the bachelor's degree course has been designed with respect to the current status, needs and anticipated development of the occupational

¹⁸ WFOT, Entry level Educational Programmes WFOT Approved, *World Federation of Occupational Therapists* [online], copyright WFOT 2011, [cit. 2014-03-16], available from: <http://www.wfot.org/Education/EntrylevelEducationalProgrammesWFOTApproved.aspx>

¹⁹ European Network of Occupational Therapy [online], ENOTHE, ©2012, [cit. 2012-10-11], available from: <http://www.enothe.eu/>

therapy system in the Czech Republic, with a view toward harmonizing the curricula of university degree professions in the European Union. The study plan was designed to meet the requirements placed on the study programme according to the Decree laying down minimum requirements for study programmes to acquire proficiency for the performance of non-medical healthcare professions²⁰ and to meet the recommendations of ENOTHE and the 2002 Revision of the minimum standards for education of occupational therapists, established by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT)²¹.

The study plan of the bachelor's degree course in occupational therapy at the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University consists of a total of 2,935 hours. The total includes theoretical pre-clinical and clinical subjects, tutorials and practical training course. The study course in occupational therapy includes on-site practical training, which is organized at healthcare and social care facilities. These facilities have a contract with the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University for internships and practical training programmes for students of occupational therapy. These facilities delegate an occupational therapist, who is in charge of teaching and enters into a contract for work with the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University. Contractual partners cover a wide range of acute clinical fields, inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation facilities and various social services.

The range of lessons in the bachelor's degree course in occupational therapy:

lectures:	531 hours
seminars:	790 hours
practical education (practicals, tutorials, clinical internship, practical training):	1,614 hours

The study course is governed by the Study and Examination Code of Charles University in Prague, and by Rules of Study at the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University. Study proceeds under the university credit system, which is in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) rules.

The total hours of study in the subsequent master's degree in occupational therapy, without elective courses, is 1,505 hours, of which:

theoretical instruction (lectures):	240 hours
theoretical and practical training (seminars):	420 hours
practical education (practicals, tutorials, clinical internship, practical training):	845 hours

²⁰ Decree No. 39/2005 Coll. laying down the minimum requirements for study programmes to obtain proficiency for the performance of non-medical healthcare professions, in: Collection of Laws of the Czech Republic, 11 January 2005

²¹ C. Hocking, E. Nils, *Standards for education, ENOTHE: Revised minimum standards for the education of Occupational Therapist*, Australia, WFOT, 2002; World Federation of Occupational Therapists [online], Australia, WFOT, ©2008, [cit. 2012-11-1], available from: <http://www.wfot.org/>

As part of the study, each student will complete a total of 845 hours of practical education.

On-site clinical training (clinical training programme):

- The student will complete 285 hours of training in occupational therapy within the clinical training programme in the selected clinical facility during semester study over the period of two years of study.
- 120 hours during the three-week summer occupational therapy internship in the selected clinical facility in the first year of study, and eighty hours during continuous two-week summer practical training in occupational therapy in the selected clinical facility during the second year of study, which is a total of 200 hours.

The total number of hours within the on-site clinical training (clinical training programme) is 485 hours.

The study field of Occupational Therapy is divided into study years that consist of winter and summer semesters; each semester has fifteen teaching weeks. The study plan contains block teaching, wherein one week represents twenty-five hours of study (in the form of seminars, lectures, tutorials, and practical training courses)²². Students from the first year of study shall complete on-site special practical training at relevant facilities under the guidance of qualified occupational therapists ensuring the proper interconnection of theoretically acquired knowledge and its practical application in real practice. Most supervisors of special practical courses are graduates from occupational therapy at the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University, or are recognized experts in the field.

As the aim of the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague is to constantly improve the quality of teaching in the field of occupational therapy, it therefore participated in the ENOTHE Peer Review projects during the years 2001–2005.

In the spring of 2004, the quality of teaching in the field of occupational therapy was evaluated in the pilot Peer Review project at the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University. The aim of this project is to support the harmonization and quality assurance of teaching of occupational therapy at the university level in Europe. External evaluators in the Peer Review project examined how the quality criteria are fulfilled in teaching occupational therapy at the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University according to the new revision of the 2002 WFOT Minimum standards of education of occupational therapists. The recommendations resulting from the Peer Review project are incorporated into the study plans submitted for re-accreditation by the Ministry of Education and Sports of the Czech Republic.

²² 1.st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague, *Internal regulations as amended on 30 June 2009*, Uhersky Brod, EUROTISK Navratil, 2009

The objective of the study course is to obtain professional competence for the profession of occupational therapist and to perform activities related to the provision of healthcare under the Act regulating the requirements for the acquisition and recognition of qualifications for non-medical professions and activities related to the provision of healthcare, under the decrees regulating the activities of healthcare and other professional workers and the decree laying down minimum requirements for study programmes to acquire professional competence for the performance of non-medical healthcare professions²³. Master's degree study includes the fundamental aspects of theoretical and practical education in the field of occupational therapy for children, adolescents, adults, and seniors and basic knowledge, for occupational therapy, of internal medicine, surgery, neurology, traumatology, orthopaedics, psychiatry, occupational therapy for patients/clients with sensory impairments and/or mental disorders.

The programme provides basic knowledge of science and research, evidence-based medicine and evidence-based practice. Students learn to work on the Internet, use special search engines, retrieve and process information, process lectures using modern technologies, use quotes and citations, process scientific articles and so on.

At the end of the two-year master's degree programme, students take their final state exam, which consists of the defence of their master's thesis and the following exams: Occupational therapy in clinical fields, legislation and management in healthcare and social areas.

Graduates from occupational therapy can find employment in the Czech Republic at outpatient and inpatient healthcare facilities, especially hospitals and rehabilitation clinics, as well as in rehabilitation homes or day care centres and hospitals for chronically ill patients. Occupational therapists are used extensively in home and community care, in social services for people with disabilities, elderly people and in institutions for people with mental disorders and illnesses. Occupational therapists may work in pre-work rehabilitation programmes in cooperation with vocational rehabilitation, which is the responsibility of employment agencies, or in special schools or schools attended by students with special needs, and also in social services. The objective of occupational therapy is to enable patients/clients of all ages and with different types of disabilities to maintain optimal independence in routine daily activities and to achieve the highest possible quality of life.

²³ Decree No. 39/2005 Coll. laying down the minimum requirements for study programmes to obtain proficiency for the performance of non-medical healthcare professions, in: Collection of Laws of the Czech Republic, 11 January 2005; Regulation No. 96/2004 Coll. regulating the requirements for the acquisition and recognition of qualifications for non-medical professions and activities related to the provision of healthcare and amending certain related acts (Non-Medical Healthcare Professions Act), in: Collection of Laws of the Czech Republic, 4 February 2004; Decree No. 55/2011 Coll. regulating the activities of healthcare and other professionals, in: Collection of Laws of the Czech Republic, 14 March 2011

Profile of graduates from the bachelor's study course in occupational therapy

The profile of graduates is processed in accordance with the Decree regulating the activities of healthcare and other professionals²⁴. After completing the study programme, a graduate will be able to perform the following activities:

- Graduates will acquire the necessary knowledge of the theoretical and clinical biomedical and social fields needed for their profession. Graduates have a good overview of the theoretical background, philosophy and content of the field of occupational therapy; they are able to plan, implement, evaluate and document the course of prevocational rehabilitation, the creation of short-term and long-term occupational therapy plans and interventions according to the clinical diagnosis, the needs of the patient/client and, based on the guidelines and doctor's indications with regard to the preservation of functional abilities, to achieve optimal function in the area of activities and the participation and inclusion of the client into society to achieve the highest possible quality of life.
- Graduates will have a general overview and learn the background of all available methods in occupational therapy so they can gradually acquire specialization in their field during the practice of lifelong learning. After completing the programme, graduates are able to diagnose functional abilities and manage therapy with clients of all age groups with different types of disabilities.
- Obtain detailed knowledge of occupational therapy approaches, methods and guidelines used for therapy in different types of diseases and disabilities, especially with practicing routine daily personal and instrumental activities, the analysis of activities, selection and application of assistive and compensation devices and technical aids, the production of thermoplastic splints, pre-work preparation, and practicing cognitive functions, including the use of creative techniques. Graduates are able to apply the occupational therapy process in practice, which involves, as an integral part, prevocational rehabilitation and occupational therapy aimed at analyzing the activities of the patient/client in relation to the performance of routine daily activities, education, motivation, prevocational, work-related, educational and leisure activities. The occupational therapist shall assess environmental factors such as living space evaluation and designing barrier-free apartment solutions using facilitation means²⁵.

Graduates may submit an application to the Registry of Healthcare Professionals Competent to Perform Healthcare Procedures without Professional

²⁴ Decree No. 55/2011 Coll. regulating the activities of healthcare and other professionals, in: Collection of Laws of the Czech Republic, 14 March 2011

²⁵ Decree No. 55/2011 Coll. regulating the activities of healthcare and other professionals, in: Collection of Laws of the Czech Republic, 14 March 2011

Supervision (hereinafter the Registry), which is given by the Act regulating non-medical healthcare professions. By entry in the Registry, graduates are entitled to work without professional supervision and undertake to meet the requirements and conditions for lifelong education in the Czech Republic in their profession²⁶.

According to information from the Czech Association of Occupational Therapists, which is addressed by healthcare and social facilities with requests for the publication of vacancies for occupational therapists, there is good market demand for occupational therapists in the Czech Republic²⁷.

Monitoring current changes in the study field of occupational therapy

Bachelor's and master's degree programmes in occupational therapy must be re-accredited at certain time intervals and must reflect new knowledge, trends and information in the field.

WHO International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health was included in the bachelor's and master's study plan of occupational therapy²⁸.

In rehabilitation, including occupational therapy, it is necessary to objectify the functional consequences of etiologic diagnoses. The objective of rehabilitation is to minimize these functional consequences and try to achieve the premorbid functioning of a person. It is therefore secondary prevention. Tertiary prevention is assurance of the optimal quality of life for people with disabilities.

Functional diagnosis during the course of an impaired state of health due to a disease, injury, or birth defects is more important than etiological diagnosis in many life situations²⁹. We use the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health to classify the degree of disability³⁰. International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) can also be used in assessing the degree of disability in terms of long-term social services and support³¹. The

²⁶ Regulation No. 96/2004 Coll. regulating the requirements for the acquisition and recognition of qualifications for non-medical professions and activities related to the provision of healthcare and amending certain related acts (Non-Medical Healthcare Professions Act), in: Collection of Laws of the Czech Republic, 4 February 2004

²⁷ Czech Association of Occupational Therapists [online], Prague, CAE, ©2008, [cit. 2012-10-12], available from: <http://www.ergoterapie.cz>

²⁸ J. Pfeiffer, O. Svestkova, *Mezinárodní klasifikace funkčních schopností, disability a zdraví: [International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health]*, MKF, Prague, Grada, 2008, p. 280

²⁹ O. Svestkova, et. al., *Mezinárodní klasifikace funkčních schopností, disability a zdraví, WHO (MKF), International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, WHO (ICF)*, Prague, Charles University in Prague, First Faculty of Medicine, 2010, p. 44

³⁰ J. Pfeiffer, O. Svestkova, *Mezinárodní klasifikace funkčních schopností, disability a zdraví, [International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health]*, MKF, Prague, Grada, 2008, p. 280

³¹ O. Svestkova, et al., *Organizace rehabilitace při použití MKF (Mezinárodní klasifikace funkčních schopností, disability a zdraví WHO) a stanovení stupně funkčního postizení (disability) podle kvalifikátoru*, „Rehabilitace a fyzikální lékařství“ 2010, Nr. [Organization of rehabilitation using the ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, WHO) and determination of the degree of functional disability according to qualifiers], „Rehabilitace a fyzikální lékařství“ 2010, Nr 2, p. 43–50

ICF is a universal language that can be used by healthcare professionals and non-medical professions – lawyers, teachers, managers, biomedical engineers, decision makers, politicians, and can be used at the international level. Last but not least, this language may also be used in the statistical evaluation of people with disabilities, which is essential for the creation of social, pedagogical and employment services for people with a disability in individual countries³².

Students of the bachelor's program obtain basic information about the existence of this classification to provide them general orientation in the given topic. Students can acquire deeper knowledge within the elective subjects and possibly in the master's degree programme. Students also have the opportunity to complete the course "Practical Application of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health", the methodology of which is guaranteed by the Clinic of Rehabilitation Medicine in the First Faculty of Medicine of Charles University and General Teaching Hospital in Prague. For the completion of this course, students can receive credits of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and obtain an international certificate of attendance issued in Czech and English.

The social need of the occupational therapy programme

Occupational therapy has its own irreplaceable position within rehabilitation, because its aim is to achieve the maximum self-sufficiency and independence of clients and increase their quality of life and participation in society. Through targeted and meaningful employment, training of routine daily activities, recommendations of suitable assistive devices and modifications to the home and school and occupational environment, occupational therapists facilitate the full participation of persons with disabilities in society. Occupational therapy has contributed considerably to improving the quality of life for people with special needs, to possibilities for their education, employability and family life. Occupational therapists activate and motivate clients by using creative techniques.

A total of 862 occupational therapists are licensed in the Czech Republic, and the Czech Association of Occupational Therapists professional organization has 202 members. In practice, this means eight occupational therapists per 100,000 inhabitants. The number of occupational therapists in the Czech Republic is still very low compared to other European countries. According to the statistic data of the Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries:

1. In Germany, the number of occupational therapists is 35,000, and the professional organization has 10,318 registered members. In practice, this means forty-three occupational therapists per 100,000 inhabitants.

³² *International classification of functioning, disability and health: ICF*, Geneva, World Health Organization, 2001, p. 299

2. In Belgium, the number of occupational therapists is 6,000, and the professional organization has 744 registered members. In practice, this means sixty occupational therapists per 100,000 inhabitants.
3. In England, the number of occupational therapists is 31,591, and the professional organization has 23,362 registered members.
4. In the Netherlands, the number of occupational therapists is 3,515, and the professional organization has 1,800 registered members. In practice, this means twenty-two occupational therapists per 100,000 inhabitants³³.

Conclusion:

Occupational therapy is a sophisticated, essential and important field that is studied at universities in most developed countries of the world and is essential in the healthcare and social sectors, in the teaching and educational process, and in the employment sector, and facilitates the inclusion of minority parts of society (persons with disabilities, the unemployed, socially disadvantaged, the homeless, prisoners, immigrants, and so on) into majority society.

There is a lack of occupational therapists in the Czech Republic, and most graduates from occupational therapy in the Czech Republic work primarily in the health and social sectors. Successful students of occupational therapy have been able to receive a bachelor's degree in the Czech Republic since 1996, while the first master's degree course in occupational therapy will be opened in the 2014/15 academic year. We also have our first post-doctoral (PhD) students. We hope that our graduates from occupational therapy will start working in interdisciplinary rehabilitation teams in the area of science and research, will publish independently and in the future will be able to consider the establishment of independent departments of occupational therapy at our universities.

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³³ Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries (COTEC), Summary of the occupational therapy profession in Europe 2013, COTEC, updated 10/03/2013; Summary of the occupational therapy profession in Europe [online], COTEC, ©2012, [cit. 2012-07-23], available from: <http://www.cotec-europe.org/userfiles/file/%20ot%20summary/Summary%202012.pdf>

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