



The role of the occupational therapist in adolescent mental health: A critical review of the literature

**Laura Hardaker¹, Elizabeth J. Halcomb¹, Rhonda Griffiths¹, Natalie Bolzan²
and Karen Arblaster³**

1. Sydney South West Centre for Applied Nursing Research (Sydney South West Area Health Service and School of Nursing, University of Western Sydney), Liverpool, New South Wales, Australia
2. School of Social Sciences, University of Western Sydney, Bankstown, New South Wales, Australia
3. Sydney West Area Health Service, Nepean Hospital, Penrith, New South Wales, Australia

Abstract

There are substantial bodies of literature focusing on mental health and the mental health of young people. There is also a growing body of knowledge relating to the professional role of the occupational therapists in mental health. However, there is a marked gap that brings these areas together. Adolescence is a time of heightened stress, with as many as one in four young people experiencing a mental health problem; appropriate care is required to reduce the impact of mental illness on their transition into adulthood and subsequent adult life. Whilst the effectiveness of the multidisciplinary team in providing interventions has been well demonstrated in this client group, the roles and impact of the individual health professionals are less well understood. A review of the literature was conducted to better understand the current and potential role for occupational therapists working with young people with mental health issues.

Keywords

adolescents, youth, mental health, occupational therapy, multidisciplinary, professional identity, role

Contact: Laura Hardaker, BAppSc (Hons) OT, Doctoral Candidate, School of Nursing, University of Western Sydney; and Sydney South West Centre for Applied Nursing Research, Locked Bag 7103, Liverpool BC, NSW 1871
laura.hardaker@sswahs.nsw.gov.au

Citation: Hardaker, L., Halcomb, E.J., Griffiths, R., Bolzan, N., & Arblaster, K. (2007). The role of the occupational therapist in adolescent mental health: A critical review of the literature. *Australian e-Journal for the Advancement of Mental Health*, 6(3), www.auseinet.com/journal/vol6iss3/hardaker.pdf

Published by: *Australian Network for Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention for Mental Health (Auseinet)* – www.auseinet.com/journal
Received 2 May 2007; Revised 31 October 2007; Accepted 31 October 2007