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Keynote Address: Translating qualitative research into practice and enhancing the therapeutic alliance

The therapeutic relationship is occupational therapy's most potent tool. Enabling client stories, or narratives, promotes the development of strong and trusting relationships with occupational therapy clients. Within the therapeutic encounter, narratives enable people to frame their illness, disability and suffering so as to grasp their meaning; at the same time they provide clients the opportunity to create future chapters to their lives. This presentation addresses the importance of employing narratives, first outside of the research context, as a means of cultivating and enhancing the therapeutic relationship, and then as a research method that generates knowledge *about* the therapeutic relationship. It goes on to address how research findings derived from a narrative approach can be translated into practice with the aim of enhancing the therapeutic relationship. Findings from research on cross cultural occupational therapy and community mental health practice are presented, with particular attention to laying the foundation of the relationship, therapist disclosure, moving forward, and building trust, safety and acceptance within the therapeutic encounter. The importance of narrative competence as a core competence in occupational therapy is emphasized.