



## **European Public Health Week (EUPHW) Kick-Off Event**

*Monday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2019 10.15 - 11.30am*

*An initiative by the European Public Health Association (EUPHA).*

*Co-organised by the European Commission and co-financed by the EU Health Programme.*

*Supported by the WHO Regional Office for Europe.*

Roundtable Discussion with: Natasha Azzopardi Muscat, EUPHA; Patricia Flynn, Council of Occupational Therapists for the European Countries (COTEC); Thomas Dorner, Austrian Association of Public Health; Pasquale Cacciatore, EUPHANxt; Mariam Lobjanidze, University of Georgia.

Good morning,

My name is Patricia Flynn and I'm delighted to be representing the Council of Occupational Therapists for European Countries (COTEC) at this event to kick-off the first European Public Health Week.

I would like to thank the European Public Health Association EUPHA for the opportunity to be so involved and particularly in this kick-off event; recognising the contribution that we as a profession make to the promotion of public health and wellbeing.

There is strong evidence that involving occupational therapy in public health policy, planning, and service-delivery is effective and cost efficient.

Occupational therapy improves lives and saves money.

Research has shown that investing in occupational therapy in public health and primary care services leads to

- better health outcomes,
- reduced hospital admissions,
- reduced GP visits,
- and more appropriate referrals within the community and health and social services
- and most importantly there are better health outcomes for the people we work with

(RCOT, 2019)

Occupational therapists promote meaningful participation in communities and we do this through supporting people to engage in purposeful activities in real environments.

Our specific expertise lies in the interplay between a person's skills and abilities, the activities they need to and want to engage in, and their social and physical environment.

In order to give examples of how occupational therapy can, cost-effectively, improve lives of people in the community, I'd like to reference the 5 daily themes of this European Public Health Week:

So, for example, an occupational therapist might:

1. facilitate an elderly man recovering from a stroke to return to his routine of going swimming every morning (thereby remaining Physically Active)
2. support a young adult with Cerebral Palsy to attend their chosen university and live independently with their fellow students (in a healthy and accessible environment)



3. ergonomically adapt a workstation to allow a nurse with fibromyalgia to remain in work with reduced fatigue and pain (Care 4 Care)
4. an older woman with dementia could be supported by an occupational therapist to participate in a community kitchen garden project contributing towards her own sustainable and healthy diet.
5. And finally, an occupational therapist might work with a teenager with social anxiety towards attending a local youth group (Youth Mental Health).

So what is the common thread in all these examples? : Occupational Therapy keeps people active in a meaningful way and engaged in their communities – which we all know, instinctively, and the evidence repeatedly shows promotes health and well-being.

Before I finish, I would like to specifically promote an event on tomorrow, Tuesday at 4-5pm (GMT) Reykjavik time, which I believe is 6-7pm Brussels /CET.

Please do download the TravAble.is app – available for free for on both Android and iPhones – via Facebook. Download the app ahead of time, ready for the scheduled coordinated event tomorrow. This app, not-for-profit and designed by an occupational therapist, allows users to register accessible places in their cities, or places they are visiting, and make that information available to others.

To finish up, I would like to again to thank EHPHA and wish you all an active and meaningful EU Public Health Week and many more in the future.

#### REFERENCES :

- Bolt, M., Ikking, T., Baaijen, R. & Saenger, S. (2019). Occupational Therapy and Primary Care. Primary Health Care Research and Development 20 (e27); 1-6.
- Bolt, M., Ikking, T., Baaijen, R. & Saenger, S. (2019). Scoping Review: Occupational Therapy Interventions in Primary Care. Primary Health Care Research and Development 20 (e28); 1-6.
- Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) (n.d.). Occupational Therapy and Primary Care - Removing the Barriers to Participation. Retrieved from [https://www.rcot.co.uk/sites/default/files/OT%20and%20Primary%20Care\\_A5%20ENG.pdf](https://www.rcot.co.uk/sites/default/files/OT%20and%20Primary%20Care_A5%20ENG.pdf) on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2019.