

Questioning Assumptions



Dr Karen Whalley Hammell

We welcome Dr. Hammell as our final presenter at the Second Annual OT 24-hour Global Virtual Exchange (OT24VX) in 2011. We invited Dr. Hammell to challenge our own assumptions about our profession and take the conversation beyond this annual event, back to your places of work.

About Dr. Hammell:

Dr Karen Whalley Hammell is an Honorary Research Associate of the Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy at the University of British Columbia. She is the author of two books: *Perspectives on disability and rehabilitation: contesting assumptions; challenging practice* and *Spinal cord injury rehabilitation*; and a co-editor of *Qualitative research in evidence-based rehabilitation* and of *Using qualitative research: a practical introduction for occupational and physical therapists*.

An enthusiastic writer, her work on disability and rehabilitation has been published in a variety of forums, including several consumer-orientated disability magazines, six physical therapy and occupational therapy books, and the international *Guardian Weekly* newspaper (60,000 copies of this article were subsequently used in the 2008 Swedish Scholastic Aptitude Test). She has also published numerous papers in occupational therapy, disability, medical and rehabilitation journals.

Dr Hammell is the occupational therapy representative on the international editorial board of *Spinal Cord*. She is a past recipient of awards from the Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists for contributions to the profession and to the community, and was the recipient of the *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy's* inaugural Golden Quill Award in 2010 for her paper: *Sacred texts: A sceptical exploration of the assumptions underpinning theories of occupation* (simultaneously published as *Les textes sacrés: un examen sceptique des suppositions qui sous-tendent les theories sur l'occupation*).

Passionately opposed to credulity - the disposition to believe on insufficient evidence - and especially to manifestations of credulity within the occupational therapy profession, Dr Hammell's writings on professional practice, research and theories of occupation reflect her desire to foster critical thinking,

challenge taken-for-granted ideas and promote intellectual scepticism and integrity. Her work also aspires to contest and combat inequities of power in clinical and research relationships, and to advocate critical occupational therapy practice that addresses not solely people's abilities, but also the conditions of their lives. In these endeavours, she is strongly influenced by critical theories and particularly by post-colonial theory and critical disability theory.

Dr Hammell's research interests focus primarily on issues of living with spinal cord injury (both physical/psychological and social/environmental issues), on perceptions of quality of life following profound life disruption (such as a serious accident or illness), and on the relationships between occupation and well-being. Karen lives with her husband and horses on a farm in the Souris River valley in south-east Saskatchewan.