

## Occupational Insecurity in Public Health Research: A Personal and Professional Journey



Lynne Zeldenryk,

Lecturer & PhD Candidate, James Cook University, Australia

[lynne.zeldenryk@jcu.edu.au](mailto:lynne.zeldenryk@jcu.edu.au)

### *Abstract*

Lymphatic filariasis (LF) is the leading cause of physical impairment globally, with 40 million people living with chronic manifestations of the disease. Despite this, research into the impact of the disease for individuals, families and communities affected by the disease remains limited as public health researchers and planners focus on the biomedical aspects of the disease. This presentation will discuss the insecurities I faced as an occupational therapist entering the realm of public health research into LF. As a therapist, I felt empowered and confident in my occupational focus in practice. However, upon entering into research in an area dominated by a biomedical science, my confidence waned and a period of occupational insecurity begun. Within this presentation I will discuss my journey of occupational insecurity and explore how my personal journey mirrors the challenges our profession faces in advocating our role in public health. It is hoped that this presentation will provide an introduction to a broader discussion later in the session where occupational therapists can share their stories of occupational insecurity in practice and research.

### *Objectives of Presentation and Group Discussion*

- To examine how and where occupational science fits within public health research and practice.
- To discuss and share experiences of occupational insecurity in practice and research.
- To provide a forum for OT's working in regions where OT is in its infancy as a profession (particularly the Asia-Pacific region) to discuss challenges in advocating and maintaining an occupational focus within health systems and governments that remain focused on a medical model of health.

### *Biography*

Lynne is an occupational therapist and lecturer at James Cook University who is currently completing PhD studies. Her study is focused on developing culturally appropriate disability measurement tools for lymphatic filariasis, with a focus on Bangladesh. Lynne has previously worked in Tonga as a Disability Advisor for the Tongan Red Cross Society and has supervised three cohorts of fourth year occupational therapy students on placement at the Centre for Orthopaedic Rehabilitation for Children in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam. Lynne coordinates the Bachelor of Occupational Therapy (Flexible Delivery) course at James Cook University.