Occupational Science – future directions in the UK?

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Early occupational therapists in the UK worked in hospitals.
Historic theory bases for occupational therapy

- Medical sciences
- Psychology
- Sociology
but ..........

THE TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGIN’
Theory bases for the 21st century?
The effect of widening our theory base

Occupational Therapy

Occupational Science
However there are tensions ..........

• **Occupational science** is very new and has yet to make an impact beyond occupational therapy

• **Occupational science** has yet to be evaluated and critiqued

• Not all practitioners have embraced **occupational science**
• Occupational science is embedded in OT UK education but students can struggle to see its application on placement.

• Commissioning of occupational therapy education in most of the UK comes through the Department of Health, reinforcing the medical culture in which much OT is positioned and creating a mindset of financial dependency – the polar opposites of the trajectory in which occupational science can take the profession’s development.
This raises some questions we need to consider

• Should it be the responsibility of occupational therapists to ‘own’ occupational science? If so, will our perspective necessarily narrow its development? Should limited OT resources be used to fund OS R&D?

• To develop services from occupational science concepts how do we change the mindset from intervention for ‘illness’ to helping people live meaningfully in society? Where are the experienced role models?

• Does the profession require new skills to develop the occupational science agenda?

• Is there an occupational science agenda in the UK? Is there an OS community? Who should lead it?