THE DEVELOPMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN ST. FINAN’S PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, KILLARNEY (1932-1939)

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PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Methods
- Findings
- Discussion
- Conclusion
INTRODUCTION

• The benefits of historical research
  – Assists with current actions, decision-making and rationale (Schwartz and Coleman 1988).
  – “Concepts, ideas, and practices that were left behind may, upon reflection, provide a basis for new thinking and future directions” (Friedland 1998 p131).
  – Forms our professional identity (Sweeney 2005).
  – For advancement and progression of the profession (Trentham 2011).
  – Provides a critique of contemporary theory and practice (Hocking 2012).

LITERATURE REVIEW

• International Influences in the 1930s
  – “medically prescribed, medically supervised, and medically controlled” (LeVesconte 1934 p323 as cited in Friedland 2008).
  – Dr. Meyer, Dr. W.R. Dunton Jnr. (American psychiatrists) and the use of occupational therapy in mental illness.
  – First training school, ‘Dorset House’ and occupational therapy dept. opened in London.
  – British and Scottish Associations of Occupational Therapy set up in the 1930s (Wilcock 2002).
**Dr. Eamon O’Sullivan**

- Psychiatrist and RMS in St Finan’s Hosp. 1933-1962. Also a key figure in Kerry GAA for many yrs, trained the football team to 8 all-Ireland finals (7 of which they won).
- Author of ‘Textbook of Occupational Therapy: with Chief Reference to Psychological Medicine’ (1955). One of the first European books on the topic.
- Significantly, the foreword was written by Dr William Rush Dunton Jnr who was an early American pioneer of occupational therapy.
- O’Sullivan’s book is based on his experiences of developing occupational therapy in St. Finan’s and the international occupational therapy literature at that time.
- Unrecognised for his contribution to occupational therapy in Ireland until Univ. of Limerick research rediscovered his work.
- Instigated the building of Fitzgerald’s Stadium and Ross Products (Fogarty 2007).

**Research Question**

- How did occupational therapy develop in St. Finan’s Psychiatric Hospital from 1932-1939?
METHODS

• Historical documentary research of primary sources of data from St. Finan’s.
• Ethical clearance provided by HSE South to gain access to the archives in Kerry libraries.
• Documents analysed included: the Hospital of Management Committee minute book and two head nurse’s books
• Analysed using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006).

FINDINGS

• Identified 2 themes:
  1. Establishment of what was called the occupation-therapy department.
  2. Delivery of occupational therapy in St. Finan’s.

• Subthemes were identified:
  Planning, finance, permission, staff and equipment and sections of treatment.
Theme 1: Establishment of the Occupation – Therapy Dept.

- Established in November 1934 and located in the Isolation Building of the hospital.
- O’Sullivan advocated in his book for the need for professionally qualified occupational therapists. There weren’t any in Ireland at that time and so the dept. was staffed by nurses and attendants.
- Dr. O’Sullivan continued to advocate for equipment, materials and staff for the occupation- therapy dept.
- With the funding he hoped to receive from the Minister [of Dept of Local Government] he planned to include a female floor and a male floor in the department.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Repairs and Additions</th>
<th>Probable Cost</th>
<th>Signee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1934</td>
<td>1. General &amp; Dental Surgery</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
<td>(RMS) Dr. O’Sullivan.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Refrigerator</td>
<td>£350</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Occupation-Therapy Dept.</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Tradesmen’s Shops</td>
<td>£3,500</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Front Entrance</td>
<td>£400</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Patients Comforts</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Recreation Halls</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Extra Land</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Furniture and Decorations</td>
<td>£1,100</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Blackwood Floors</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. House Telephone</td>
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<td>12. Laundry Equipment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Farm Machinery</td>
<td>£800</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Swimming Baths</td>
<td>£3,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For’d Total £7,000.

Total £ 21,050
THEME 2: DELIVERY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN ST.FINAN'S.

• In Dr.O’Sullivan’s book he described the various sections of occupational therapy treatment as (1) Handicraft (2) Recreational (3) Re-educational or Habit-Training” (O’Sullivan 1955 p59). This shows the influence on his thinking of early international occupational therapy pioneers.
• Documents analysed contained evidence of recreational, handcraft and utility occupations.
• Occupational therapy was delivered through the occupation-therapy department, tradesmen’s shops and throughout the hospital, indoors and outdoors.
### DISCUSSION

- In the challenging economic recession of the 1930s Dr O’Sullivan persisted and advocated for access to resources and means to implement what he believed was the “*chief form of mental treatment* “ at the time (Minute Book 1933 p573).

- Research, planning, communication and organisation resulted in the introduction and establishment of what was called occupational therapy in the hospital.
CONCLUSION

• This research confirms the contribution of Dr. Eamon O’Sullivan to the development of occupational therapy in Ireland and the challenges he faced to establish and develop occupational therapy in St. Finan’s.

• These earlier challenges in occupational therapy can encourage and inspire modern professionals to be innovative and embrace the current challenges to provide a creative and resourceful service (Quiroga 1995).

THANK YOU

“THE MORE YOU KNOW ABOUT THE PAST, THE BETTER PREPARED YOU ARE FOR THE FUTURE”.

(THOODORE ROOSEVELT)
References


• Archival Material
• Killarney Mental Hospital (1937) Head Nurses Book
• Killarney Mental Hospital (1938/39) Matron’s Report Book
• Killarney Mental Hospital (1932-1935) Minute Book