Is More Better?

Reed, et al., and Acquaviva and Presseller (AJOT, June, pp 114-115, 1983) give a possible solution to the occupational therapy manpower shortage. New occupational therapy educational programs will motivate potential students in the vicinity to apply to enter the profession.

I question whether “spreading” and “more” is in the best interest of the profession. Reed’s comment that “therapists make excellent teachers” may be true. However, teaching clients who want to improve their state of being, or training one or two occupational therapy students on fieldwork experience is quite different from sustained classroom teaching of large groups of students or from organizing, managing, and administering an educational program.

In addition, from whence are the faculty to come? The Ad Hoc Manpower Commission report to the Representative Assembly (3:31 83) states that, for the past 3 years, an average of six to ten schools have been looking for a director at all times.

My initial motivation to write this letter was to say I found it intriguing to see the misprint of a dollar sign instead of a letter on page 414, column 3, line 6, which emphasizes the basic need in occupational therapy—my view is that one of the basic problems in occupational therapy education and manpower is the inadequate monetary compensation for services rendered.

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Test Validation—An Urgent Need for Occupational Therapy

In their article on test construction, Benson and Clark (AJOT, December 1982) state that “the third type of validity, construct validity, is the most difficult and perhaps the most important form to obtain.” (p 799) The authors recommend a procedure for construct validation, however, that is hardly suitable for occupational therapists, the multitrait-multimethod procedure, about which Kerlinger states: “the investigation and measurement of important constructs, like conservatism, aggressiveness, teacher warmth, need for achievement, honesty, and so on, ultimately require it. In many research situations, however, it is very difficult to administer two or more measures of two or more variables to large samples.” (2)

I wish to caution therapists against this complicated method. The unsuitability of the multitrait-multimethod procedure is only meaningful in the context of specific problems encountered by therapists using tests and measurements in their practice and research. Correlations (which are used in the multitrait-multimethod procedure as the sole basis of inferences on construct validity or invalidity) do not fully or meaningfully reflect traits, because they are a composite of factors. They do not reflect single traits, as factors do. Correlations are so-called surface-trait, in contrast to factors, which are the in-depth underlying pure constructs (also termed traits or attributes).

On the other hand, Benson and Clark are very discouraging about the feasibility of factor analytic validation in occupational therapy, They need not be. There are examples of factor analytic construct validations by occupational therapists (3, 4-7). In fact, this method, for which several useful and readily applicable computer programs are available, is the method of choice. “Factor analysis is perhaps the most powerful method of construct validation... It is a method for reducing a large number of measures to a smaller number called factors...” (2)

From a few cases it becomes obvious how important it is to accomplish this parsimony. Factor analysis showed that several widely used test batteries did not measure what they purported to measure. Therefore, they did not have construct validity. Instead of a battery of distinct constructs for which the measures had been designed in reality, they measured merely a single construct. For example, factor analysis indicated that the Oseretsky Motor Development Scale measures only Gross Motor Ability, not six hypothesized discrete abilities (8); the Frostig Developmental Test of Visual Perception does not measure five hypothesized abilities (9, 10); and Cratty’s Perceptual Motor Test Battery does not measure four abilities, but only one, that of Gross Motor Ability (11).

It is just as important, for the sake of our profession’s ethics, acceptance, and stature, to invalidate and discard unsuitable test instruments as it is to validate and retain suitable ones. This is the “eternal sifting and winnowing” of scientific research “by which alone the truth can be found.” After accomplishing validation of a test, as was recently done, for example, by Bledsoe and Shepherd for a preschool play scale, the task...