The psychosocial aspects of human occupation have been at the heart of occupational therapy since the profession’s inception in 1917. An understanding of psychosocial perspectives is essential in clinical practice and is an integral part of educational programming for occupational therapy practitioners. Over the years, the number of occupational therapy clinicians practicing in different specialty areas has changed as a result of many external factors. Occupational therapy professionals have been especially sensitive to the needs of society and have answered the call to address many of these emerging needs. The effects of reimbursement, medical advancements, legislative initiatives, and societal trends have resonated in our practices, in the opportunities that occupational therapy practitioners have pursued, and in the constructing of the future face of our profession. We have seen where and with whom we practice go from a large percentage of occupational therapy personnel working in settings addressing psychosocial areas as a central focus to settings addressing psychosocial issues in a more integrated manner. Occupational therapy practitioners have adapted and are constantly thinking through where the profession has been and where it is going. Certain key factors have guided the profession through the complexity of change. Grounding our thoughts and actions are the heart of what we are about—occupation and human function. Our holistic view of the individual, including our understanding of and ability to address psychosocial issues, has made us important leaders and contributors in delivering services that are of value to individuals and society. Literature helps both the practitioner dealing with change and the student entering the profession. All the books discussed in this review contribute to occupational therapy and bring important perspectives for consideration.

The Person as Patient: Psychosocial Perspectives for the Health Care Professional, edited by physical therapist Elsa Ramsden, has two distinct sections. The first section addresses the psychosocial aspects of human development, integrating the work of most of the major human development theorists and providing a good overview of psychosocial development across the lifespan. The second section looks more closely at the psychosocial aspects inherent in the relationships between the health professional and client in clinical practice. Many valid issues are addressed and nicely developed, with examples drawn from physical therapy practice. Overall, the book is well organized, and the writing is easily read and understood.

Although Psychosocial Perspectives for the Health Care Professional has some relevance for occupational therapists, it has more value for physical therapists and physical therapy educators. Examples are good and focus on a population with physical disability. Because the psychosocial aspects have a more central role in occupational therapy practice, the examples and perspectives offered are less applicable. The main health professionals mentioned in the text were physical therapists, physiotherapists, and physicians. Offering other health professions’ perspectives would have increased the value of the work and broadened its audience. Another absent aspect was related to teams. Although the book focuses on the client, I think that many relevant points related to the function of teams in addressing the overall psychosocial issues of clients could have been made.

The next three texts focus on the occupational therapy professional. The Living Skills Recovery Workbook by Pat Precin provides activities developed for use with persons with mental illness and chemical addiction. A 12-step recovery focus to the activities is outlined, and the author, an occupational therapist, points out that the workbook can be used on a one-to-one basis between therapist and client, with groups, or by an individual consumer. Although the book definitely has an occupational therapy approach, other professionals can also use it. Four chapters focus on time management for 12-step treatment, stress management for recovery, social skills for sobriety, and activities of daily living for abstinence. Each chapter contains group leader plans and forms for several sessions. Topic
evaluation forms and a quality assurance data sheet also are included. This workbook is well-developed and practical. The activities are clear and easy to follow, as are the objectives and procedures for each session, making it very easy to understand the linkage between recovery and the various sessions and a valuable contribution to the occupational therapy literature.

The value of Psychosocial Occupational Therapy: A Holistic Approach by Franklin Stein, an occupational therapist, and Susan Cutler lies not so much in practical clinical application, but in the historical and theoretical context. Each chapter begins with clearly stated operational learning objectives. The writing style, especially in the first few chapters, is one that draws the reader into the story of the treatment of persons with mental illness and the role of occupational therapy with this population. Reading the first-person accounts and those of family members are especially illustrative of the value of occupational therapy and makes the treatment process come alive. The remainder of the text addresses theoretical models used in psychosocial occupational therapy, evaluation and assessment, various aspects of treatment, continuous quality improvement and reimbursement, and clinical research. Theoretical models and evaluation are covered in breadth and depth, as are the chapters focusing on treatment. Although medication is an important aspect of the treatment of mental illness, the lengthy chapter on medications seems out of place, and with the rapid development of psychotropic drugs, it runs the risk of quickly becoming dated. More helpful would have been a lengthy discussion of how medications and their side effects affect human functioning, thus linking the general information provided to the occupational therapy process. The chapter addressing quality improvement is very general. The information provided is sound, but a specific application to psychosocial practice is not as evident. The final chapter addresses research with general information as well as specifics in a psychosocial setting. Absent from the discussion is the use of the various types of qualitative research, which is valuable with this population. As a reader, I found myself wanting less of the general information, which can be found in separate texts with a research focus. This text is a valuable addition to the occupational therapy literature and of special value to educators and students.

New Frontiers in Psychosocial Occupational Therapy, edited by Anne Hiller Scott, looks beyond the rapidly changing, chaotic health care environment of the near past and today into the future of mental health occupational therapy practice. The first section examines the effect that changes in health care delivery has on ourselves, our clients, and society and offers views on how we all can survive and take charge. The second section includes articles about four states that have taken action in developing proactive approaches to the changing health care environment. The third section deals with consumers and includes first-person accounts. The remainder of the book includes topics relevant to today’s issues: Americans With Disabilities Act in relation to disclosure of mental illness to employers, the use of the Internet and World Wide Web by mental health practitioners, and education of occupational therapy students in mental health settings. The book is well written and thought provoking. The diverse topics are interwoven in the theme of new frontiers. By looking closely at what is happening today in psychosocial occupational therapy practice and offering insight into proactive future directions for practitioners and educators, the book fills a gap in the occupational therapy literature.

In summary, all four books reviewed contribute to the literature, with the last three having greater relevance to occupational therapy professionals. Each has different goals and missions, and the value of each book for practitioners will depend on roles and work settings. The books also are valuable resources for students and educators.

Judith A. Melvin, PhD, OTR/L
Chair, Occupational Therapy Program
Arizona School of Health Sciences
Phoenix, Arizona

Creative Therapies: A Psychodynamic Approach Within Occupational Therapy
Kim Atkinson and Catherine Wells (2000)
Stanley Thromes Publishers Ltd.,
Ellenborough House, Wellington Street,
Cheltenham GL50 1YW, United Kingdom
302 pp., paperback
ISBN 0-7487-3310-8
This gem of a book hopes to inspire creativity in its occupational therapy readership and to inspire confidence in those who pay for psychodynamic occupational therapy. Atkinson and Wells are occupational therapists and lecturers in occupational therapy and physiotherapy at the University of East Anglia. The primary audience is British occupational therapists who work with psychosocial issues; however, practitioners living in other geographic areas and working in other specialties (particularly creative therapy practitioners, such as art therapists) have something to gain from this text. Sections on the theoretical foundations of this approach, group development theory, and therapeutic properties of different media have been treated elsewhere in the occupational therapy literature, but rarely with this degree of intelligence and sophistication.

This book has made the creative therapy process explicit and demonstrates that creative therapy can be considered an evidence-based practice. The book devotes an entire chapter to the changing political and economic realities of the health care environment and suggests ways in which creative therapy can be carried out economically and with integrity. Without oversimplifying, the authors take both the novice student and the seasoned practitioner on a beautifully crafted journey that will deepen their understanding of working in groups with creative media to bring about meaningful and measurable change in their clients’ lives and their own.

Emily I. Raphael, MS, OTR
Clinical Assistant Professor
Occupational Therapy Program
State University of New York–Downstate Medical Center
Brooklyn, New York

Ways of Living: Self-Care Strategies for Special Needs, 2nd Edition
Charles Christiansen, EdD, OTR, OT(C), FAOTA (Ed.) (2000)
The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., 4720 Montgomery Lane,
PO Box 31220, Bethesda, MD 20824-1220
420 pp.; $55.00 (AOTA members); $70.00 (nonmembers)
ISBN 1-56900-141-3

The second edition of Ways of Living addresses the full spectrum and meaning...