

## **A Qualitative Study of a Workplace International Employee Health Program**

**Authors :** Jennifer Bradley

**Abstract :** With opportunities to live and work abroad on the rise, effective preparation and support for international employees needs to be addressed within the work-site. International employees must build new habits, routines and social networks in an unfamiliar culture. Culture shock typically occurs within the first year and can affect both physical and psychological health. Employers have the opportunity to support staff through the adaptation process and foster healthy habits and routines. Cross-cultural training that includes a combination of instructional teaching, cultural experiences, and practice, is shown to increase the international employee adaptation process. However, little evidence demonstrates that organizations provide all of these aspects for international employees. The occupational therapy practitioner (OTP) offers a unique perspective focusing on the employee transactional relationship and engagement of meaningful occupations to enhance and enable participation in roles, habits and routines within new cultural contexts. This paper examines one such program developed and implemented by an OTP at the New England Center for Children, in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. The effectiveness of the program was assessed via participant feedback and concluded that an international employee support program that focuses on a variety of meaningful experiences and knowledge can empower employees to navigate healthy practices, develop habits and routines, and foster positive inter-cultural relationships in the organization and community.

**Keywords :** occupational therapy practitioner, cross cultural training, international employee health, international employee support

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