Introduction: Workplace discrimination and poor attitudes continue to be barriers faced by occupational therapists with disabilities, commonly experienced in the form of unsupportive attitudes and not being granted appropriate adjustments. Nonetheless, the views and perceptions of employers and employees towards colleagues with disabilities has received little research attention. Although a limited number of articles exist, only one specifically deals with health care professionals (Wood and Marshall, 2010) and none examine occupational therapists' perspectives. This limited evidence indicates three themes: the level of concern held by employers and employees for colleagues with disabilities, the positive and negative attitudes they have toward such employees and the provision of accommodations by employers/employees for colleagues with disabilities. As there is a lack of research regarding occupational therapists perspectives; this study aimed to address how occupational therapists as employers and employees viewed their fellow employees and occupational therapy students with disabilities.

Method: An online survey was sent to 106 occupational therapists via a University fieldwork database in April-May 2016. The survey collected demographic on participants, work areas, involvement in recruitment process and disclosure; in addition to the participants’ perspectives on employees with disabilities. Additionally, the survey included a number of case vignettes and open questions. Data was analysed using SPSS and thematic analysis.

Results: The response rate was 41.5% (44/106) with 41 women and 3 men, 31.8% (14) participants reported a disability (seen and unseen). A majority 66% (29) were involved in some aspect of the recruitment process.

The findings indicate there are benefits to employing someone with a disability including: empathising with clients, providing different perspectives, creating disability awareness in the team and a more diverse workforce. Most reported supportive attitudes to their work colleagues. However a few indicated negative/unsupportive examples from the workplace.

Nonetheless, there were issues with employing someone with a disability. Issues reported were: cost, feasibility and impact of adaptations, work absence and possible increased workload of colleagues, ability to fulfil demands of the role, safety and time pressures.

In relation to disability support services, a small majority indicated these were available at their place of work; however others indicated they did not know. Types of disability support services available in the workplace included: access to occupational health and counselling, making reasonable accommodations, access to workplace environment assessments and staff support network.

An overwhelming majority reported that they were aware of legislation specific to individuals with disabilities. When asked has relevant legislation impacted upon their accommodations of employees or students with disabilities the main responses were: legislation has increased awareness of providing reasonable accommodations, aware of the legislation but had not put the knowledge into use. Most stated that there are procedures in the workplace that created an inclusive and diverse working environment.

For the majority, disclosure was reported as being an issue for the employee with a disability and they should be in control of who, when and how much they disclose. However other views were expressed in relation to disclosure and work performance.

Conclusion: As expected occupational therapists are mostly supportive of their colleagues with seen and unseen disabilities and creating inclusive work settings. However there remain a number of areas that require increased professional attention and discussion.