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OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MONTH 2008 HIGHLIGHTS PROFESSION AS CAREER CHOICE

(Bethesda, MD) – The numbers don't lie. Demand for occupational therapy services is on the rise and new practitioners are needed to fill that demand. The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is using OT Month 2008 as an opportunity to highlight the profession as a vital and satisfying career choice.

"We are looking everywhere for new practitioners to help us keep up with demand," said AOTA President Penny Moyers Cleveland, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA. "AOTA members are going out into their communities, universities, and even high schools to find qualified applicants. We want students of all ages to know what occupational therapists do and how they can join this dynamic and caring profession."

Occupational therapy has been cited as one of the top professions for 2008 by *U.S. News and World Report*.

A 2007 study by the Midwest Center for Health Workforce Studies, at the University of Illinois at Chicago showed that a shortage of practitioners affects all geographic regions and practice settings, including hospitals, nursing homes, and community settings. The study concluded that the shortage exists as a result of both increased demand and reduced supply.

"Many new client groups are asking for occupational therapy—from parents of children with autism to people with low vision problems," said Dr. Moyers Cleveland. "Prevention and wellness are important too but we need to recruit more candidates to meet the need."

Numbers from the Bureau of Labor Statistics support the conclusions of the workforce study. According to BLS data, employment for occupational therapy practitioners is expected to increase 23% between 2006 and 2016. This is much faster than the average rate of employment increases for all other occupations. The BLS also noted that median earnings for occupational therapists topped the \$60,000 mark. Occupational therapy programs report that graduates are being offered salaries of up to \$75,000 for some fields.

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“As we prepare to celebrate the profession’s centennial in 2017, these numbers show that occupational therapy practitioners must be available to meet the needs of society,” added Dr. Moyers Cleveland. “OT Month is the opportunity to spread our message and recruit more practitioners. After all, who better than practitioners to explain what a great career choice occupational therapy is? “

For more about occupational therapy as a career, see the [Prospective Students](#) area of the AOTA Web site.

For more on the [Midwest Center study](#), visit the University of Illinois at Chicago Web site.

About the American Occupational Therapy Association

Founded in 1917, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) is the nationally recognized professional association of approximately 38,000 occupational therapists, occupational therapy assistants, and students of occupational therapy. AOTA advances the quality, availability, use and support of occupational therapy through advocacy, education and research on behalf of its members and the public. For more information, visit us on the Web at www.aota.org.

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