



From the Desk of...

AOTA®

Penelope A. Moyers Cleveland, EdD, OTR/L, BCMH, FAOTA
President, American Occupational Therapy Association

Dear Fellow AOTA Member:

Now that the New Year has begun, I'd like to take a few moments to reflect on the past year and to share my thoughts about the challenges and opportunities that await us in 2009.

In the past year, despite the severe economic conditions, AOTA has continued to effectively advocate on behalf of the profession.

We have achieved **key legislative victories** that have been vital to maintaining payment and recognition for occupational therapy services. Our work on a national **outcomes database** still continues and will have great impact in substantiating the benefits of occupational therapy to consumers, insurers and policymakers. Our public relations efforts have brought **media exposure** and national attention to our work. We made considerable progress during 2008 in **gathering and disseminating evidence** that supports what we do, and we have led **collaborations** with major organizations to address societal issues such as productive aging, autism, and mental health.

More change is coming in 2009. Health care reform is at the top of the agenda for the incoming Obama Administration and the new Congress. Let's be clear – what will be at stake during the health care reform debate is continued consumer access to OT services.

AOTA is your strongest voice in the health care reform debate and the *only* voice solely dedicated to promoting occupational therapy. Your membership in AOTA is essential now more than ever. Just as critical is the need to educate those who are not members and who do not currently support AOTA. They must know what is at stake for them and for their profession.

To ensure that occupational therapy is part of an improved health care system, we must meet head-on those who don't support or understand occupational therapy, stand up to cost-cutting pressures in Congress, and continue our new public awareness campaign. Our **"Living Life To Its Fullest" brand campaign** will help consumers and policymakers appreciate more fully the value of OT in helping people achieve independence. **Watch for the January 19th issue of OT Practice for your own copy of the new *Living Life To Its Fullest* poster.**

Being an AOTA member is your best investment in having a strong national voice at the health care reform negotiating table, on the public awareness front, and in the community that will build a strong future for our profession. I am asking for your continued support, and for your assistance in recruiting new members to AOTA over the next three months.

Every AOTA member needs to seek out colleagues who are not current members and strongly encourage them to join AOTA today. We are counting on you to stand behind us in this way so that we can continue to act on your behalf in the challenges we face. To help you recruit new members, we have created an M2M (Member-to-Member) Toolkit available on this site. Please utilize the toolkit today and join with us in this critical campaign!

The important challenges ahead of us can be addressed only by working together, which is what our AOTA professional community is all about. If ever there was a time to put our collective power to work, it is now!

My best wishes for a happy, healthy and peaceful New Year,

Penelope Moyers Cleveland