

Dear Colleagues,

As AOTA Vice President overseeing the implementation of the Centennial Vision and as ASAP President and a Centennial Vision Commissioner, we want to spread the word and express our excitement about AOTA's bold vision—that "by the year 2017, occupation therapy is a *powerful*, *widely recognized*, *science-driven*, and *evidence-based* profession with a *globally connected and diverse workforce* meeting society's *occupational needs*." This vision serves as a roadmap for the future of the occupational therapy profession to commemorate our 100th anniversary and will specify concrete benchmarks that demonstrate our forward movement towards its realization. It was not developed by a few select visionary members or a strategic planning consulting firm; rather, it emerged from an open dialogue among stakeholders, including students, practitioners, educators, state representatives, researchers, the AOTA Representative Assembly, and the Board of Directors. The collaboration of these bodies in thinking about and planning for our shared future is a testament to the solidarity and deep commitment existing within our profession.

We want to take the opportunity to clarify the meaning and relevance behind the key words within the Centennial Vision.

To be and become *powerful*, occupational therapy practitioners will need to hold leadership roles in health care delivery systems, to be active in policymaking, and to utilize technology to provide services. The source of this power is a strong educational foundation, which will equip practitioners to influence change to benefit society. Possessing power also will mitigate the stress of reimbursement for our services and open the path to and fuel the proliferation of private-pay practices.

To be *widely recognized*, we need to have a simple, clear, compelling public image and use consumer-friendly language to answer the frequently asked question "What is occupational therapy?" and to communicate the value of our services. A widespread understanding of what occupational therapy is, coupled with society's recognition of the value of occupation to health and wellness, will result in increased consumer demand for occupational therapy. We have had public awareness campaigns before, but these have only featured a fraction of how certain occupational therapy practitioners meet society's needs. And we certainly have made progress. But what we need now is a simple message that the public will "get" and remember that captures the substance of what we do, that is practical and personal. Formulating the message is a challenge, but we plan to work with top-of-the-line professionals who can deliver what we need. In turn, demand for occupational therapy services will help to ensure that the identity and scope of our profession is recognized and protected by law.

To be *science-driven* entails fostering the growth of occupational science and recruiting occupational scientists. We envision that premier universities will acknowledge the unique perspective occupational scientists bring to the table and specifically seek them out to engage in research. Given that occupational science is the body of knowledge that informs and can demonstrate the efficacy of our practice, it is imperative to increase our research capacity and productivity. All occupational therapy practitioners must be equipped to use science-based knowledge guided by our time-honored values to demonstrate our power in meeting societal needs.

In addition to being science-driven, it is critical that occupational therapy be *evidence-based*. This requires that as much occupational therapy practice as is feasible be justified through evidence and that the data confirming the efficacy of occupational therapy be widely available. As a result, payers will be more likely to reimburse occupational therapy services because it is a proven, cost-effective treatment that improves health and quality of life.

All of the above cannot be attained without a *globally connected and diverse workforce*. We believe the growth and increased involvement of AOTA members is necessary to acquire this dynamic workforce. Active membership will bolster AOTA's role as an essential tool of the profession—a clearinghouse for all occupational therapy-related information, events, and networks. At the heart of AOTA will be a workforce that includes not only practitioners, but educators, researchers, scientists, and

entrepreneurs who reflect society's diversity. This network will create a web of resources and links to other professionals with whom we can form new alliances, locally and globally.

With a globally connected and diverse workforce, we will be better positioned to address society's occupational needs. According to Ann Wilcock's theory of the human need for occupation, humans are biologically designed to engage in activities. It follows that staying engaged in life, being able to participate in one's world of activity has a major impact on health and well-being. This ability to "do" may be compromised by changes in social, political, economic, and technological contexts. We must be vigilant and mindful of changes in these contexts to help us identify what occupational needs are emerging, or are not being met, and how occupational therapy can fill the void.

At this juncture, the Centennial Vision provides an image of how the profession can move forward in our rapidly changing world. This vision cannot be achieved without your support. This letter is a call to action to actively support this movement by

- spreading word of the Centennial Vision to your colleagues and helping them recognize that they are an integral part of a professional community;
- engendering a passionate, grassroots allegiance to progress and innovation in our profession;
- identifying the key issues in your state that are aligned with Centennial Vision goals;
- documenting and tracking the concrete steps being taken to address key issues; and
- enlisting and inspiring colleagues in your state to use their expertise and talents to
 - be ambassadors of the vision,
 - monitor legislation,
 - o conduct research,
 - o use evidence-based practice,
 - o network with other professionals, and
 - advocate for the profession.

We invite you to partner with us on this endeavor to shape and fortify our profession as the number one profession in facilitating people's active participation in life and helping all Americans to live healthier lives. We need your energy and dedication to encourage others to embrace the vision, each in their own way. Keep us abreast of your successes as well as your struggles, and let us maintain open lines of communication to capitalize on and sustain the momentum set in motion towards realizing the Centennial Vision. The golden age of our profession, which Csikszentmihalyi has described as the time when its knowledge, its practice, and the values of its stakeholders are in alignment, is fast approaching.

Sincerely,

Florence Clark, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

- Florence Clark

AOTA Vice President

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