

**The American Occupational Therapy Association
Create Better Linkages between Education, Research and Practice Ad Hoc Committee**

**Final Report to the Board of Directors
September 2007**

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Jean E. Polichino, MS, OTR (Chair, Harris County Department of Education), Chairperson
Janice Burke, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA (Thomas Jefferson University), BOD Liaison
Angi Griffin, MA, OTR (Children's Health System)
Stephen B. Kern, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA (Thomas Jefferson University)
Jaime Munoz, PhD, OTR, FAOTA (Duquesne University)
Jacqueline Voss, OTR CLT (Barnes-Jewish Hospital)

Neil Harvison, PhD, OTR, Director of Accreditation & Academic Affairs, AOTA
Laurel Radley, MS, OTR/L, Staff Liaison, AOTA

CHARGE TO THE COMMITTEE:

This committee was charged with advising AOTA on projects and activities that will build stronger linkages between research, education, and practice and with making preliminary recommendations that will inform new and evolving AOTA initiatives, particularly in the areas of continuing education, evidence-based practice, annual conference, and publications. The Ad Hoc committee was requested to specifically address four issues within the charge:

1. work with the editors of AJOT and OTJR to investigate the possibility of AJOT research articles being required to contain a "translation to practice" component;
2. recommend ways in which to connect universities and practitioners;
3. recommend ways in which to connect science to practice and education to practice; and
4. design an ongoing systematic approach to evaluate the effectiveness of any recommended actions.

KEY CONCEPTS THAT EMERGED FROM THE COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

1) The committee adopted the concept of promoting **practice scholarship** with all members of the profession as key to addressing the charge. In doing so, the committee identified that scholarship and lifelong learning are not the exclusive domain of academics and researchers. For the profession to continue to thrive and meet its stated vision for the 21st century, it is essential that we recognize scholarship as key role of the practice, education, and research communities. The committee identified that the concept of practice scholarship is meant to reflect an ethos of life-long learning applicable to all occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants.

2) The committee identified that the current education system and culture of our profession does not promote the role of scholarship within the practice community. Interviews conducted by the committee with the key representatives from the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF); the Evidence Based Practice (EBP) initiative; senior AOTA staff; and members of the practice community and research community confirmed the challenges faced when promoting research and scholarship within the occupational therapy practice community.

3) A review of the reports submitted by the committees formed for the Centennial Vision Project to address the six priority practice areas identified the lack of scholarship in practice as common shortfall in all areas of practice.

4) In making its recommendations, the committee felt strongly that all appropriate bodies within the organization should be involved in the process of building stronger linkages among research, education, and practice, including COE, COP, EDSIS, AMSIS, ACFW and FEW.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The committee has addressed each issue in the charge with recommendations informed by the data collected and reviewed, and by the experience of members with knowledge of historical efforts to make linkages between research, education, and practice. Following each recommendation is rationale that summarizes the committee's discussions and suggested actions.

Issue #1: Work with the editors of AJOT and OTJR to investigate the possibility of research articles being required to contain a "translation to practice" component.

Recommendation

AOTA/AOTF sponsor a meeting of the editors of *AJOT*, *OTJR*, *OT Practice* and other selected publications focused on OT issues to determine how they can work together to facilitate translation of research to practice using their publications. This meeting could be web based or in-person.

Rationale

In recent years, the American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT), *OT Practice*, and the Occupational Therapy Journal of Research (OTJR) have published multiple articles on issues related to evidence-based practice. However, while articles and issues regarding evidence-based practice (including translating research to practice, practice and education-based implications) were identified, particular attention to or clear definition of these sections was not evident (limited headings and sections demarcation) in the committee review of a sampling of various articles. It was also evident from interviews conducted with practitioners that these journals are not widely read outside of the academic community. Editors of the AJOT and OTJR were queried to determine their perspective on including a specific translation to practice component with research articles.

The current AJOT editor, Mary Corcoran, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, responded through Email correspondence that in the past three years, AJOT has been proactive in addressing the translation to practice component. AJOT has used editorials to define the issues and set boundaries for their approach addressing this topic, and actively promoted this issue to those submitting manuscripts. Current OTJR editor, Helene Polatajko, PhD, OT Reg. (Ont.), FCAOT, acknowledged the challenge of getting practitioners to read OTJR. She relayed her interest in discussing the inclusion of a translation to practice component with her board.

The committee also noted that there are numerous other publications addressing OT practice issues. The committee felt that opening a dialogue with the editors of these publications would be the first step in achieving this goal which would be of benefit to both the publishers and the profession.

Next Steps:

- Identify ways to increase practitioners readership of the journals:
 - AOTA/AOTF work together to give members, particularly practitioners, access to electronic bundled journals to provide resources to members.
- Identify ways in which the journals can promote the “translation to practice” component:
 - Develop special issues of AJOT, OTJR and *OT Practice* that are topical, focused on practice scholarship and research/education/practice linkages.
 - Identify for practitioners where the Translation to Practice piece is by creating a subheading, “Translation to Practice” in articles, editorials and special columns.
 - At the end of the journal, include a “The Issue is... Translation to Practice” piece where an invited practitioner writes how individual articles, editorials or columns lead them to rethink what they are doing or how they appraised the “try-ability” of the intervention and applied it to their current practice.
 - Investigate the option of *OT Practice* to highlight practice-related research that is being published (combing of current literature).
 - Use *OT Practice* to follow-up with how a research article from AJOT or OTJR was applied in practice (illustrating the “try-ability” and process of application of research). This may include feature articles that provide practitioners with ideas for how a recently published research article was/can be applied to practice.
 - Identify how further research could be done on the topic at the end of an article or column (e.g., how to use single subject design in practice with patients).
 - All publications consider special issues on the topic of transferability of research to practice including practice scholarship, and research/education/practice linkages. Specific articles might include tutorials for developing partnerships across clinics and universities, increasing practitioner research and evidence skills and examples of practitioners who have successfully increased their skills and transferred research findings into practice.

Issue #2: Recommend ways in which to connect universities, researchers, and practitioners.

Recommendation

Make an upcoming AOTA Conference theme *Finding Your Inner Scholar: Focus on Lifelong Learning*. Conference design should target multiple venues for linkages and connections among educators, researchers, students, and practitioners.

Rationale

The committee believes everyone within the profession -- researchers, educators, practitioners, students -- needs to play a part in linking universities and practitioners. Leaders in all areas need to model action-oriented activities that are interactive, dynamic, and sustainable.

Next Steps:

- Conference planning strategies could include initiatives such as:
 - Provide bulletin boards in the poster area where attendees could post a “want ad” for a research site, or an “access available” notice from a practice setting where research efforts are welcomed. As conference unfolds the linkages that have been made are illustrated with visual depicting collaborations formed as a result of the conference experience.
 - At the Opening Ceremony, showcase video testimonials/stories that show how everyone is connecting (scientist with practitioner, clinic manager with faculty, students with practitioners, and fieldwork educators with university researchers and faculty) – a 6 degrees of separation approach.
 - Provide a Marketplace Storefront populated by those who are already making links serving as advisors and consultants to conference attendees.
 - Target in the Call for Papers sessions linking educators, researchers and practitioners. Give session priority for education-research-practitioner links.
 - Target interactive sessions (rather than didactic sessions) for dialogues among practitioners, scientists, fieldwork educators using roundtable formats, panel discussions, and poster sessions to formalize the linking process.
 - At newcomer and student events, facilitate socialization of the translation to practice process.
 - Institute a session of “Speed-Dating” session to increase networking and link educators, practitioners, and scientists – make it a cocktail event to draw participants.
 - Promote Scholarship of Practice activities modeled on the Scholarship of Learning year-long mentoring activities (see Institute 05 in 2007)
- Beginning in educational programs and throughout the profession, AOTA will promote the notion of practitioners as scholars – practitioners as life-long learners with roles to play within education, practice and research as part of their careers.
- Build into the proposed Fieldwork Toolkit an ethos of practice scholarship behaviors, e.g., modeling of life-long learning and investing in contributing to research and evidence-based practices.
- Ensure that the model curriculum identifies and includes practice scholarship and research on the same level as practice in their curriculum. Evidence-based practice should be clearly evident and woven throughout the curriculum.

- Include model curriculum content associated with development of interpersonal/relationship-building/leadership skills needed by students to promote investigation and change (evidence-based practice) when they are in the field.
- To promote the linkages between universities and practitioners, AOTA's student conclave could provide a venue for 1) mock interviews (how to present yourself as a life-long learner in the interview process), 2) modeling the documentation of evidence-based activities for a professional portfolio, and 3) developing strategies, including being a change agent when presented with the current disconnect between evidence-based and historical-based practice.
- AOTA consider exploring venues for promoting the value of the experienced professional who integrates life-long learning into practice, perhaps characterizing this professional as the "new generalist."
- AOTA explore electronic mechanism (blogs, listserves, etc.) for linking faculty and practitioners and for promoting communication among them.

Issue #3: Recommend ways in which to reconnect science to practice and education to practice.

Recommendation

AOTA needs to identify and publish a collection of best practices that academic programs are using for integrating evidence into student/practitioner roles in academic fieldwork programs. The profession needs to promote the concept of practice scholarship.

Rationale

Education programs are central to the development of practice scholarship among those entering the profession. However, practice scholarship is not apparent in too many practice environments. The committee identified the need to change practice environments if new graduates are to be able to carry skills associated with practice scholarship into practice. Access to scientific information and access to linking mechanisms are critical for those in practice. Also critical are the development of models illustrating how to use evidence-based practices and how to communicate its meaning in dialogues with patients/clients to help with decision-making.

This committee believes that the relationships built through professional education in general and fieldwork in particular, are key elements for change in the profession. When university and practice sites share ownership and oversight of student projects, it is mutually beneficial and promotes practice scholarship. Important attention needs to be given to fieldwork, fieldwork educators, students, and university fieldwork coordinators if we intend to seed a change.

Next Steps:

- Academic programs need to explore ways to generate compelling questions from clinical fieldwork sites. One model would call for students to be assigned site-driven evidence-based projects as part of their coursework. In this situation, the student is the connector/link between the new learning in the classroom and the clinical environment. The student seeks questions from fieldwork sites prior to going to the site, uses course

assignment to collect some answers from the literature and then goes to the site with a start point for further inquiry.

- Use the previous university research monograph, “Integrating Research into the Curriculum” as a model.
- AOTF revisit the previously utilized Special Interest Section model for assisting practitioners to become researchers.
- Use the recommendations of the six 2007 AOTA board priority ad hoc committees to define priority clinical questions to advance research and practice. Develop multifaceted mechanisms for linking people working in those areas to those who can do the research. Consider threading these priorities in all association activities.
- Use the Affiliated State Association Presidents (ASAP) to assist with developing/promoting state-level workshops on evidence-based practice with AOTA providing electronic access to evidence-based resources during the workshop to facilitate skill building
- AOTA establish links for members from the AOTA website to online journals and databases to support evidence searches.
- Consistent with the six 2007 AOTA board ad hoc committee reports, have the Special Interest Sections generate priority research questions from their practice settings
 - Use the listserves/SIS annual programs at conference to collect questions
 - Publish questions in SIS quarterlies
- Develop a mechanism on the AOTA Resource Directory site that is completed each time a person accesses it and solicits feedback on the usefulness of the resources and what else might have been helpful to the member.
- Create a database where member researchers and practitioners can enter 1) descriptions of populations they are seeking to study or 2) their need for help developing research questions, respectively, so that linkages can be facilitated.
 - Add the database to the Evidence-Based Resource Directory area on the website
 - Have a practitioner/researcher kiosk at conference with a computer where members can make entries into a database that will connect resources.
 - On membership applications and renewals, have a question that generates information on this issue for inclusion in the database.
- Develop a clearinghouse on the AOTA website where members can find lists of university programs that are recognized for ongoing research activities *and* the areas of practice that their scientists are focused on. (This clearinghouse could be linked electronically to many different related research activities on the website)
- Ask the Administration and Management Special Interest Section (AMSIS) to investigate successful ways management can support access/time for evidence-based practice activities for practitioners.
- Develop talking points to promote the use of time within the work day, including how to translate that time into increased productivity when evidence-based practices are enacted.
- Through its publications, AOTA should promote evidence-based activities tied to career development and/or ladders, and illustrate how pay incentives for using/maintaining skills can be tied to reward.
- To facilitate linkages and promote scholarship in practice, university/fieldwork partners pursue student projects that take advantage of area practice settings and pursue development of research projects that are rooted in the dilemmas of area practitioners. To

foster the development of learning communities, university/fieldwork partners explore role responsibilities in regards to the ACFW, and how they could facilitate these linkages.

- Continue use of practitioners as adjunct faculty, finding ways to fund ongoing partnerships and use them as resources in curriculum planning and development, and in accessing populations for research activities.
- Evidence-based activities be woven throughout the actions taken on the recommendations from the *Ad Hoc Committee to Explore and Develop Resources for OT Fieldwork Educations*.
- Include interactive learning resources and “How to” guidelines for the recommended Tool Kit.
- To inform the Model Curriculum projects, AMSIS generates a document from practitioners identifying successful strategies that facilitate change in organizations to support evidence-based practice and clinical research. The Education Special Interest Section (EDSIS) promotes the inclusion of those strategies in curriculum and fieldwork instruction to students so they are prepared to tackle this issue.
- The administration/management component of occupational therapy curriculum promote the inclusion of evidence-based practice activities tied to career development and/or ladders with pay incentives for using/maintaining skills tied to them.

Issue #4: Design an ongoing systematic approach to evaluate the effectiveness of any recommended actions.

Recommendations

- Identify a strategy for identifying and collecting evidence of the occurrence of translation to practice activities in AJOT, OTJR & OT Practice. Report these activities to the membership and solicit feedback from members regarding usefulness of the information.
- Develop and implement a survey of students doing fieldwork to determine whether they are seeing evidence-based practice at fieldwork sites. A baseline can be established; periodic surveying can be done to measure progress against the baseline.
- Identify practice scholarship activities at AOTA conference from available AOTA conference data. Determine the kinds of activities desired at future conferences, including submissions linking research/education/practice, and communicate/solicit what is desired to membership annually in the Call for Papers and other conference promotional vehicles.
- Data collected on the aforementioned activities to build stronger linkages among research, education, and practice should be communicated to members annually (both national data and data disaggregated by region) to mark progress the profession is making in this endeavor.

Bibliography

- Apte, A., Kielhofner, G., Paul-Ward, A., & Braveman, B. (2005). Therapists' and clients' perceptions of the occupational performance history interview. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 173-192.
- Arbesman, M., & Lieberman, D. (November 2006). Using the AOTA Evidence-Based practice Resources. *OT Practice, 11*(21). CE-1 – CE-8.
- Bailey, D. M., Bornstein, J., & Ryan, S. (2007). A case report of evidence-based practice: From academia to clinic. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 61*, 85–91.
- Boyer E. L. (1990). *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*. Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for Advancement of Teaching.
- Crist, P., Fairman, A., Muñoz, J. P., Witchger-Hansen, A. M., Sciulli, J., & Eggers, M. (2005a). Education and practice collaborations: A pilot case study between a university faculty and county jail practitioners. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 193-210.
- Crist, P., Muñoz, J. P., Witchger-Hansen, A. M., Benson, J., & Provident, I. (2005b). The practice-scholar program: An academic-practice partnership to promote the scholarship of “best practices”. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 71-94.
- Corcoran, M. (2006). From the desk of the editor: Dissemination or knowledge translation? *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 60*, 5, 487-488.
- Craik, J., & Rappolt, S. (2006). Enhancing research utilization capacity through multifaceted professional development. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 60*, 155–164.
- Craik, R. (2006). Editor's Note: Opening the Garden Gate. *Physical Therapy, 86*. 8. 1062.
- Forsyth, K., Duncan, E. A. S., & Summerfield-Mann, L. (2005a). Scholarship of practice in the United Kingdom: An occupational therapy service case study. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 17-30.
- Forsyth, K., Melton, J., & Summerfield-Mann, L. (2005b). Achieving evidence-based practice: A process of continuing education through practitioner-academic partnership. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 211-228.
- Forsyth, K., Summerfield-Mann, L. & Kielhofner, G. (2005c). A scholarship of practice: Making occupation-focused, theory driven, evidence-based practice a reality. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy, 68*, 261-268.
- Frontera, W. R., Fuhrer, M. J., Jette, A. M., Chan, L., Cooper, R. A., Duncan, P. W., et al. (2006). Rehabilitation medicine summit: Building research capacity: Executive summary. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 60*, 165–176.
- Glaros, S., (October 2006). Evidence on the Clinic Floor. *PT Magazine, 50*-51.
- Kielhofner, G. (2005a). Research Concepts in Clinical Scholarship—Scholarship and practice: Bridging the divide. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 59*, 231–239.

- Kielhofner, G. (2005b). A scholarship of practice: Creating discourse between theory, research and practice. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 7-16.
- Polichino, J., & Scheer, J. (August 28, 2006). Using AOTA EBP Resources to Enter Pediatric Practice in the Context of Public Schools. *OT Practice, 11-15*.
- Peterson E.W., McMahon, E., Farkas, M., & Howland, J. (2005). Completing the cycle of scholarship of practice: A model for dissemination and utilization of evidence-based interventions. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 31-46.
- Rose, J. F., Heine, D. M., & Gray, C. M. (2005). Brief or new: Interagency collaboration to support adults with developmental disabilities in college campus living. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 165-172.
- Scheer, J., Arbesman, M., & Lieberman, D. (October 23, 2006). Using the Internet to Find Evidence to Inform Your Practice. *OT Practice, 23-24*.
- Stern, K. A. (2005). Academic-clinician partnerships: A model for outcomes research. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 95-106.
- Stube, J. (2005). A collaborative scholarly project: Constraint-induced movement therapy. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 123-134.
- Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Hammel, J., Helfrich, C., Thomas, J., Wilson, T., & Head-Ball, D. (2005a). A model of university-community partnerships for occupational therapy scholarship and practice. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 47-70.
- Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Martinez, L. I., & Casas-Byots, C. (2005b). A participatory action research approach for identifying health service needs of Hispanic immigrants: Implications for occupational therapy. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 145-164.
- Sudsawad, P. (2005). Concepts in Clinical Scholarship—A conceptual framework to increase usability of outcome research for evidence-based practice. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 59*, 351–355.
- Swenson Miller, K., & Johnson, C. (2005). New doors: A community program development model. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 135-144.
- Taylor, R. R., Fisher, G., & Kielhofner, G. (2005). Synthesizing research, education, and practice according to the scholarship of practice model: Two faculty examples. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 19*, 1-2, 107-122.