Thanks for a Successful Legislative Day!

By Jack Gleghorn

Well over a hundred students and professionals attended this year’s Legislative Day at the state Roundhouse. Between all of us, we managed to speak to the majority of legislators regarding occupational therapy. As well, most legislators received folders with information about occupational therapy, what we do, whom we serve, and how important the profession is for both our state and our healthcare system.

Additionally, this year we had the privilege of advocating for HB 192, which was the renewal of our occupational therapy Practice Act. The revision of the Practice Act had been undertaken by a small team of dedicated NMOTA volunteers who worked diligently in the months preceding this year’s legislative session to update items within the Practice Act framework that had been needing more information or clarification, such as sections on ethics and how to handle practice violations. Given the challenges that this bill faced in passing he Senate, it is fortunate that so many were present to advocate for it. Ultimately, the Governor pocket vetoed HB 192, and about 200 other bills.

The organization of Legislative Day is a yearly joint undertaking between members of NMOTA and OT students from the University of New Mexico. This year, two NMOTA members and three students worked hard to ensure that Legislative Day was successfully enacted. Students from all of the OT and OTA programs were then invited to attend, along with all practitioners statewide. This not only allows students to experience advocacy for their upcoming profession but also allows them to interact with students from different schools and programs. As well, it teaches students a great deal about the workings of our state government. A survey of UNM OT students following the day found that 100% of the students felt that their knowledge of the state legislature increased through participation in this event.

This year’s Roundhouse was significantly different from prior years. There was new leadership, all new committees, and the majority of legislators were themselves new. This meant that advocacy and education regarding occupational therapy was that much more crucial since many of the members had never heard of OT before. That being said, the response from legislators was largely positive. Most members of both the House and Senate were respectful and attentive when approached by our members. When one long-standing legislator, Representative Gail Chasey, was asked if she knew what OT was, she enthusiastically replied that yes, she knew. Her son had received occupational therapy and he had told his mother that occupational therapists are “Adults who play.”

A special addition to this year’s Legislative Day were T-shirts made especially for the day that read “Ask Me About Occupational Therapy” and which were worn by those in attendance. Students and practitioners alike reported many people within the roundhouse stopped and asked them about OT just because they had read the shirts. This enabled us to not only educate members of the legislature, but additional people present at the capitol building, as well. Given that this year’s Legislative Day took place during Autism Awareness Day at the Roundhouse, that means that we had the extra opportunity to educate many people who might need information about our services.

NMOTA would like to thank all of those who attended this year’s event. Your devotion to the cause of occupational therapy and the people that we serve has a significant impact on increasing the awareness of our profession’s distinct value. We look forward to seeing you all next year!
Let’s Get Connected

By Joan Henriksen

Please connect with other occupational therapists at Occupational Therapy New Mexico. We want to hear from you!

“Join the conversation about Occupational Therapy (OT). Like the page to post, or send us a message with your stories, pictures, and ideas about OT. We want to hear from students and practitioners but also from people who have received OT services.”

Facebook/This is OT was created and is edited by Geneva Nolan, a University of New Mexico OT student. If you are into Facebook and into OT, this is the place for you to “LIKE” and “SHARE”. Fresh news and interesting content and video hit the page every week. Be sure to promote This is OT with your clients, referral sources, colleagues, family, and friends. The more we like and share, the more visibility the power of occupational therapy has in the online universe.

Analysis of social media applications like Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest demonstrate how networks are reinforced and strengthened through spreading messages. Our message is: Occupational therapy is a distinct health profession and we are poised for 21st century healthcare practice. If occupational therapy didn’t already exist, they’d have to invent us.

Practitioner’s Corner

By Christopher Gutierrez

Rachel Gillespie: New Graduate

Brief Biography
I started out as a behavioral therapist at 18 and had the opportunity to work with some amazing kids, but sometimes felt the applied behavioral analysis (ABA) paradigm in place was not centered on the child occupation of play or other central occupations of that age group. My prevailing question was ‘how does this translate to increased levels of satisfaction and participation in the child’s life?’ My supervisor at the time saw me working with a child in the pool and mentioned the therapy did not resemble ABA, but rather Occupational Therapy. That’s when I was first able to name my path. I also started volunteering at Camp Rising Sun and saw the importance of client-centered practice and what it means to focus on the child’s motivations, inherent drive to play and aspirations and how I can facilitate those goals.

Current role in Occupational Therapy
I contract with Independent Living Therapy Services and work with adults who happen to be diagnosed with any of various developmental disabilities. I get to work with people in their homes, the community- it’s great! Sometimes we go rock climbing, we make art, we garden, we shop at grocery store, we do it all. It really depends what’s important to the individual. Often times, we work on social skills, self-awareness, self-regulation, how to
interact with someone they might have romantic feelings for or how to interact with someone at the grocery store. It’s all about context. Today for example, I worked with a client on developing self-advocacy skills in a restaurant when placing an order. Rather than having me ordering for this client, we worked on speaking for oneself and expressing their needs.

I also work at La Familia Namaste running social skills groups. It’s been fun working with with a bunch of rowdy boys and girls who love a lot of movement but don’t quite know how to organize it yet. Additionally, I also work at New Day with a group of youth experiencing homelessness. This job really focuses on development of self-regulation, non-violent communication and interaction, development of IADLs, and essentially learning how to make choices that promote your health. So many youth are not afforded the chance to make choices, or feel their choices can affect positive change in their own lives.

I also have a private business licence where I see clients with autism spectrum disorder in their homes and community settings on an individual and group basis.

**Different or unique interventions**

Many individuals receiving services through the DD waiver program benefit from specific behavioral health, and mental health supports. I spend a lot of time talking about choice-making, how to assess safety risks with the intention of helping people develop a sense of autonomy and control. With some people, this means talking a lot about relationships, sex and how to decide how to safely develop relationships with others. You’ve got to allow the dignity of risk, but support and buffer an individuals’ decision making skill set. I’ve created pictures and books that depict specific scenarios that provide insight into their own behavior. One intervention I use which I believe is entirely underutilized is video modeling. When you can see yourself on a video engaging in a behavior or act, the opportunity for reflection and processing is immense. It doesn’t always feel good, but self-reflection and self-awareness are very important skills we learned in OT school that can translate to all aspects of life. The video modeling has also been helpful in fall prevention and those with short term memory problems. Being able to show the individuals their unsafe way of navigating their world has truly increased their self-awareness. Plus, it’s a great way to assess and improve your intervention approaches as a new clinician.

**What are your thoughts regarding our current legislative climate in New Mexico?**

This is a serious passion of mine! In terms of OTs retaining our licensure, thankfully HB 192 (Scope of Practice) passed in the Senate and House of Reps. We are still awaiting the governor’s signature...and can’t fully exhale until then. But, in terms of advocating for our profession, it’s very important but not quite enough when you meet someone at a coffee shop and they ask what you do and you just say you’re an occupational therapist. Don’t leave it at that! Ask them if they know what it is and speak your truth. Most people want to hear about it and if you have a passion for it, this will shine through. It’s easy to look up bills or call NMOTA and ask what something means, but I’m working on a database that links every registered OT and COTA in the state to their assigned legislator so they can easily be contacted directly with a prefilled email shell and quickly sent. We’ve experienced other professions encroaching on our scope of practice, bills that make our co-pay for services too expensive- a number of potential threats to our profession. But, honing our advocacy skills and ensuring a positive, articulated presence at the legislative office, community and within our places of work really turn this threat into an opportunity to shine and thrive.

**If you could change about your scope of practice in New Mexico, what would it be?**

It’s no secret that New Mexico is not very well off financially, but we are in the fortunate position where this state has a lot of cultural and demographic diversity. We are just so spread out! And because of this, many of the decisions regarding treatment and access to treatment are made by those who may be afforded more affluence and are able to advocate for themselves, as compared to those residing in rural, remote areas with minimal access to resources and treatment. If OT in New Mexico were less of a consultative model and more of a direct access model, more people could access our services without the requirement of a medical referral. My goal is develop a new service delivery model in New Mexico which facilitates more direct access to OT services for those who are in need- and on a broader, community-based scale.

**Anything else you would like to share?**

Empowerment is #1. Only one month after fieldwork, embracing the mindset of “don’t try to know it all” has taught me a lot. We learn from our clients. My long term goal is to work very hard on precision, but resting in the knowing of not knowing has brought a tremendous amount of humility to my life. It’s OK not to know everything! But knowing where to find the answers is where it counts.

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**DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO TELL?**

Contact Joan Henriksen, editor of The Reacher if you would like to share your OT story in Practitioners Corner! JHenriksen@salud.unm.edu
What are the Students Up To?

SAN JUAN COLLEGE

Congratulations graduates! The San Juan College OTA Program graduated its inaugural 8 students on Saturday, May 9, 2015. The program received initial accreditation in December 2014. Kay Peters is Director of the program, and Kelly Kelley is the Fieldwork Coordinator. A “job well done” is due Kay and her team for a successful accreditation process. This is no easy feat, as anyone in OT education knows. Programs must meet or exceed the minimum standards set by the Accreditation Council for OT Education for things like curriculum design, teaching and lab space, faculty quality, equipment, and library resources. KUDOS! The program is located on the SJC campus. SJC has ten buildings and three off-campus facilities occupying a total of more than 526,300 square feet, and representing a value of more than $60 million. From its start in 1956 with 25 students, the College now has a fall credit enrollment of more than 11,000 students. Staff size has grown from a handful of part-time instructors to a present complement of just over 150 full-time faculty members and nearly 300 adjunct faculty. The College employs a total of 975 men and women (fall 2011), which includes full-time regular employees (faculty and staff), adjunct faculty, and temporary staff.

UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

The UNM OT Graduate Program celebrated the graduation of 24 Master’s of OT students from the class of 2015. A convocation was held at the Kiva Auditorium in front of friends, family, and faculty of the Health Sciences. The graduates were hooded by mentors, and then received congratulations from Chancellor Paul Roth. Afterwards, a luncheon was held on a private patio at El Pinto Restaurant where awards were given to several students achievement in academics, research, and leadership. Program awards were given to Distinguished Alumni Sara Matheny and Lisa Brower, both rehabilitation directors in the Albuquerque area; Fieldwork Educator awards went to Sherry Shellenberger and Mary Sue Williams, and the Friends of OT award went to UNM registrar Todd Hynson. The students invited Nancie Reiss Furgang, OT in neonatal practice, to give an address, and she delivered a personal and powerful story centered on the occupation of parental love and bonding with a medically fragile child.

The celebration ended with a goodbye, farewell, and “so long” tribute song from Master Jack.

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 17-18, 2015
Fieldwork Educators Certification Workshop @ University of Texas- El Paso. Go to http://store.aota.org and enter code FWUT 715

September 5-6, 2015
Save the Date: NMOTA Annual Conference. The call for papers and posters is still open. Details on registration will follow soon.

Ongoing Event:
Voting for NMOTA officers is only open until June 15th. Don’t wait!
ARE YOU HIPAA SAVVY ENOUGH?

True or False? The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) is a document health providers have clients and patients sign every year.

Sure, that’s true, but HIPAA is so much more than a form to fill out. HIPAA is the Federal law on protecting private health information. It holds all health care providers and the organizations they work for, to a high standard of protecting information. The protected health information could relate to the past, present, or future physical or mental health of the individual. Disclosure of protected health information (PHI) can happen in any form: electronic, paper, or oral information and includes financial information and demographic information from patients.

The HIPAA standards were strengthened in January 2013, to put teeth into enforcement. Disclosure now includes data breaches, including those of business partners of health practices. Patients can make complaint of HIPAA violations to the Health and Human Services Office of Civil Rights who can investigate complaints and dole out expensive punishment (up to $1.5 million civil penalties, HITECH Act AND criminal penalties!).

Hard to believe, but small practices are the most vulnerable. Most small practices cannot afford the information technology to firewall computer stored PHI, much less itinerant therapists who may inadvertently lose or leave a file containing PHI, or have a vehicle or office break-in. And all practitioners must guard the disclosures they make about clients in elevators, hallways, doorways, and in the lunch room.

HIPAA does not have permitted use of disclosure without an individuals permission in some situations. The one’s most likely to be used by occupational therapists would be: 1) to the individual, 2) for treatment, payment, and health care operations, 3) and keeping a limited data set for purposes of research, public health or health care operations.

Sharing of treatment information frequently occurs between health care providers to ensure provision, coordination, or management of health care services to the individual. OTs need to make sure the practitioner with whom they are sharing the information is a valid recipient of the information (e.g. they are legitimately involved in the person’s care, including consulting in the care, or receiving a referral for care).

OTs can also disclose PHI if it is required by law, is necessary to protect the public health, or to law enforcement in instances of abuse, neglect, or domestic violence. In general, the disclosure must be to those with “authority” over the issue: think government agencies and law enforcement entities.

PHI disclosure does happen. It happens through breaches. It happens through being overheard. And it happens between well-intentioned communication partners.

The good news is health care practitioners can position themselves for a good defense by creating a good culture of offense.

First, do your homework. Review the actual HIPAA Privacy rule.

Next, audit your own practice. Where are you vulnerable?

Third, take steps to increase compliance with HIPAA. Do you need to revise policies and procedures about how you will create, store, move, retrieve, release, destroy, or password protect/encrypt information on storage devices? Do you need to do more training with colleagues, employees, or staff? Do you need to review patients’ rights and also track when information is released? Do you know how your business associates are protecting health information?

Lastly, if you do get hit by a HIPAA complaint and you haven’t done the above recommendations. Do it now. Rectifying a bad situation may mitigate the punishment.

Look for HIPAA guidance at: http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy
NMOTA worked hard this year to bring value to members. Everyone on the Board demonstrated exceptional leadership, vision, and ability to “stick with the messy business” of running an all volunteer membership organization. Members wanted more: of everything. On the continuing education front Renee Soderlund, a Las Vegas OT, chaired the CEU committee. With Renee’s persistence her committee (Effie Pulford, Cindy Chavez) was able to plan and execute two additional CEU events in Albuquerque as well as secure co-sponsorship of other CEU events with Brown-Mackie College and the University of Texas-El Paso.

The Social Media and Communication’s team managed to put out three of the quarterly REACHER newsletters, weekly Constant Contact information, and the Marketing sub-committee also designed a creative social media “This is OT” Facebook page and our first EVER radio spot on New Mexico Public Radio (KUNM). This highly successful crew was captained by: Committee Chair-Steve Sorensen, Newsletter Editor-Joan Henriksen, and Marketing-IvyRose Gonzales. The supporting cast was rounded out by Nadya Pezzano-Guerrero, Chris Gutierrez, Jack Gleghorn, and Geneva Nolan. Not to be outdone, the Legislative Committee, chaired by Johanna Cubra, took no prisoners in planning and executing Legislative advocacy for NMOTA. Her team included Jack Gleghorn, Julie Gutierrez, Nadya Pezzano-Guerrero and Rachel Nelson. But first, we needed a bill to fight for, and the practice act was revised by Sara Picchiarini, Johanna Cubra, Natalie Themig-Vigil, and Marjorie McKenzie long before the session began. The lobbying effort was a memorable dogfight, and NMOTA was not deterred in the least in coming back even stronger in the future. NMOTA continues to put on a great annual conference at a DESTINATION location (Marriott Uptown) with the work of retired and tired ex-Conference Committee Chair Gerri Duran, Gail Stockman, Jessica Salazar-Sedillo, and Mary Thelander Hill. And the Membership Committee chaired by Jessica Miranda, backed by top hands Myra Peel and Carla Wilhite put on a sustained membership campaign to increase members in NMOTA. Old members were given reminders to renew, provided with membership cards, and new members received a hand written thank you for joining. We have a sustained 26% growth rate since 2013. From 220 Members (April 2013) to 300+ (May 2015).

We are also putting on a fair election with a full slate of candidates to pick up the governance of the Board thanks to Committee Chair Terri Crowe and Ivyrose Gonzales. We also helped send students to Conclave, helped the RA with travel expenses to Nashville, contributed to the NM Falls Coalition, and we advocated for individual members.

Long-story short: Many hands make the work light. But you may notice, many of the same names appear over and over again...and when I find old news of the association...the same names pop up over years. WHY? None of these folks are power grabbers or glory hounds. The work of the association is “blue collar” through and through, whether it is pasting labels, printing post cards, setting up tables, carrying boxes, and taking out our own wastebaskets. A simple sense of responsibility and dedication to the profession is the only common factor that I see across these human beings. More people are needed to keep the association on track and growing. Some of our Chairs and committee members will be “retiring” again. WE NEED YOU to pick up the work, to build more value for our colleagues, to show persistence, to put your EGO needs second and your WE-GO first. Are YOU ready? There will never be a better time. Call me: 505-252-2585, I have a shovel with your name on it.