**MiOTA Huron Valley Chapter Meeting Summary**

**Date**- June 15, 2021 (7 pm-9 pm)

**Speakers-** Jonathan Gasso, Gayle Agar, Karen Koch, Tatjana Tina Savich, Jeff Wilber, Lisa Wiley

**Topic**-Private Practice Panel with Q&A

**Presentation Title**- Private Practice Perspectives

**Huron Valley & Flint Chapter Leaders-**Adrienna Bartnicki, Juliane Chreston, & Nancy Vandewiele Milligan

**Summary:** A virtual meeting was held via Zoom with 27 participants. Six panelists discussed the following: What is your professional background (name, years of practice, previous practice area, degrees, certifications, etc.). Briefly describe your business (name, location/service area, number of years since opened, focus, population served/target markets, reimbursement sources, etc.). What is the biggest reward to starting your own business? What is the biggest challenge to starting your own business? What is the most valuable piece of advice would you give to someone interested in starting a private practice? Attendees were given two opportunities for questions and answers with the panelists.

Jon Gasso has been an Occupational Therapist for 4 years. Personal training led him to a career in OT. His business is PARC Home Care in West Bloomfield. This company services the tricounty area and outskirts. Jon partners with a Physical Therapist. They service approximately 300 older adults and clients with orthopedic and neurological conditions. Staying current with changing guidelines can be a burden on time and finances. As a business owner, be willing to utilize resources outside of yourself and believe in yourself. “If you put everything into it, you can do anything.”

Gayle Agar has been practicing for 37 years. Her family’s business in driver’s education and experience as a Physical Therapy aide led her to a career in driver’s rehabilitation. Gayle oversees Drivers Rehabilitation Center of Michigan locations in Livonia, Plymouth and Shelby Township. She works with all diagnoses ages 14 to 94. Her company works to complete comprehensive driver evaluations, determine need for adaptive equipment while driving, kindly provide alternatives to driving and information to support driving retirement. She considers her team a family and her work in the community wonderful. She values her ability to help people and be her own boss. Gayle reports the biggest challenge to private practice is “taking the plunge.” She also indicates time restraints as a challenge, as there is never enough of it. Other challenges to private practice include developing appropriate policies and procedures; being fiscally responsible; compliance with state regulations; staying current with codes; using evidence-based assessments; interfacing with state vendors; keeping equipment and information up to date; marketing; networking; and documenting in a timely and thorough manner. For a retirement option, Gayle’s company uses a simplified employee pension plan. Additionally, Gayle established Gayle Agar OT Services, LLC where she sees clients in their home to promote engagement in IADLs. This is a sole proprietorship funded through Michigan No Fault Insurance. One of the hardest parts of establishing a private practice is coming up with a name. Gayle says, “If you have a dream, go for it. Make sure we are promoting OT.” Gayle recommends AOTA’s Private Practice Today workshops. She also says small business loans and grants are available for entrepreneurs. The Amber grant is a specific grant for women in business. Additionally, she says being an entrepreneur has allowed her the opportunity to be a mom first.

Karen Koch practices in home modification. Her business completes OT home evaluations, additions, installs adaptive equipment and makes other home modifications to support optimal functioning in the home. Karen employs OTs, builders and a bookkeeper. Karen also established the Home Modification Occupational Therapy Alliance (HMOTA). The goals of HMOTA are to promote home modification and for OTs to build a lucrative business model. Functional Homes, Inc. is funded through auto no fault, workers compensation and private pay. Her company also uses grant based programs and non-profit organizations for funding (e.g., HUD grant). Overcoming PTs in private practice and assumptions in the field has been challenging for OTs to make a way for themselves in such businesses. Karen used hospital charges to guide her billing choices. Karen says business is tenacity and imagination.

Tatjana Tina Savich runs Quality Care Rehabilitation and Autism Center. Having to report fraud early in her career led her to an interest in ethical care. She went on to receive her MBA from Central Michigan University. During this time, she met a physician that encouraged her to assess and review other OT’s billing and paperwork. Once she established Quality Care Rehab, she marketed her practice by meeting with physicians on her lunch and asking for their most challenging patients. She has spent 18 years developing the ability to be a provider for all insurances. Only being approved for 3 to 6 visits at a time has been a challenge. Another challenge has been billing and financing. Medicaid reimbursement requires a lot of rules, regulations, training and audits. Recently hospitals have been purchasing physician practices which has resulted in layoffs. Using a small business loan, she purchased a home health business including nursing, PT, OT, speech, billing and home health aide services. She added ABA including a psychologist and MSW to her practice two years ago. She has also taught a business administration class at Wayne State University and is the Capstone Coordinator at University of Michigan. Tatjana’s advice is to make sure you have employees who know and respect your standards. She also recommends having a good relationship with the bank. Watching employees make progress with clients, working well as a team and being happy with their job is especially rewarding.

Jeff Wilber began his private practice 3 years after graduating from Eastern Michigan University. After working in a facility promoting triple and quadruple bookings in outpatient and acute care, Jeff decided to pursue work where he could ethically spend as much time as needed to help clients make progress. Mylife Home Health Care has been incredibly rewarding to Jeff through interdisciplinary collaboration, autonomy, not being limited by time, and being able to take control of a plan of care. He reports that he “didn’t know what he didn’t know” and choosing to work with a psychiatrist to develop Life Skills Village has made a significant impact on his practice. He reports one of his biggest business challenges has been marketing and recruiting clients. He also says Auto No Fault has a delay in reimbursement which can be financially challenging. His advice is “to be willing to take the risk and stick to it.” Additional advice is to maintain boundaries, focus on self-care and establish a work-home balance.

Lisa Wiley worked in a variety of facilities before taking over a business called Healing in Motion in 2010. Lisa was able to put payments down on the business to purchase it from a colleague. This business afforded her the opportunity to schedule one client at a time with time in between. She appreciated the freedom to provide slow therapy and teach patients to best take care of themselves. She takes private pay. She uses non-traditional practice such as Pilates for rehabilitation and simulated kitchen set-ups. She currently uses HelloNote for documentation and SimplePractice for scheduling. Lisa says private practice is a lot of work and her advice is to heed everyone’s caution. Lisa recommends to those interested in private practice to know your rules and regulations and be able to refer to your compliance manuals. She additionally says you must “know your why, what drives you?”

The takeaway message from these 6 panelists is that private practice is incredibly challenging, but rewarding. Each panelist saw a need and developed a way to meet that need in the community. He/she was then able to further expand on initial successes.

**Additional Resources-**

[**https://www.parchomecare.com/**](https://www.parchomecare.com/)

[**https://www.aa-driving.com/driver-rehabilitation.html**](https://www.aa-driving.com/driver-rehabilitation.html)

[**https://ambergrantsforwomen.com/get-an-amber-grant/**](https://ambergrantsforwomen.com/get-an-amber-grant/)

[**https://hmota.net/**](https://hmota.net/)

[**https://ageinplace.com/united-states/mi/functional-homes-inc/**](https://ageinplace.com/united-states/mi/functional-homes-inc/)

[**http://www.qcrp.com/**](http://www.qcrp.com/)

[**http://www.divinityhomecare.com/**](http://www.divinityhomecare.com/)

[**https://npino.com/home-health/1821246547-mylife-home-health-care/**](https://npino.com/home-health/1821246547-mylife-home-health-care/)

[**https://www.healing-in-motion.com/**](https://www.healing-in-motion.com/)

[**https://hellonote.com/**](https://hellonote.com/)

[**https://www.simplepractice.com/**](https://www.simplepractice.com/)

[**https://www.facebook.com/groups/otentrepreneurs**](https://www.facebook.com/groups/otentrepreneurs)

[**https://www.facebook.com/readysettreat**](https://www.facebook.com/readysettreat)

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

* Oncology Special Interest Section-**When: Thursday, June 17, 2021 at 7:00 p.m Where: Zoom Conference Call meeting**
  + RSVP: Email Danning Wang at [dwang4@hfhs.org](http://hfhs.org/) to RSVP
* Visit Michigan Occupational Therapy Association Facebook Group page for current information

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**SAVE THE DATES**

2021 Michigan Occupational Therapy Association Annual Fall Conference

**Thursday, September 30th - Saturday, October 2nd, 2021**

2021 Eastern Michigan University Lyla M. Spelbring FREE Virtual Lecture (1.5 PDUs)

**Saturday, September 18, 2021 11:00 AM**