Happy OT Month from the Research & Education SIS!

This month’s email focuses on and celebrates the profession and the occupational therapy professionals (OTPs) who work (often in volunteer positions) in our state and national associations to ensure that we continue to thrive and grow as a profession. Occupational therapy professionals individually and the occupational therapy profession collectively face multiple challenges and opportunities which include increased demands for accountability and evidence of outcomes, increased number of graduates entering the profession, growing competition for limited funding, cost containment, legislative changes, the development of new roles with limited evidence, and role-creep from other professions doing what was traditionally considered to be in OTs domain (Walder, et al. 2021). We need to respond adaptively and resiliently to these challenges and view them as opportunities for engagement. Facing challenges and taking advantage of professional opportunities is not new to the profession.

In her presentation at the 2025 Academic Leadership Council meeting, Rita Fleming-Castaldy PhD, OTR, FAOTA, shared how OTPs through involvement in state associations and AOTA have worked to pass landmark legislation that has positively impacted the profession. Dr. Castaldy highlights the members of the profession who worked to develop guidelines for the use of physical agent modalities, to obtain state licensure for OTs and OTAs, to define, expand and defend our scope of practice, to ensure OT was included in the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) and subsequent education legislation, and harnessed association resources to develop practice guidelines. Watch the entire presentation to learn more about the importance of membership and engagement in our state and national associations:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vWm6VXIEaIVFU5DE-D5KifeyVCGeGrNJ/view?usp=share\_link](http://https/drive.google.com/file/d/1vWm6VXIEaIVFU5DE-D5KifeyVCGeGrNJ/view?usp=share_link)

Membership and engagement in both our state and national associations can help develop and maintain our professional identity. Walder et al. (2021) identified four themes related to how professional identity is developed and maintained. The first theme is our shared knowledge and paradigm, the second theme is professionalization and professional socialization, the third is application of our professional knowledge or enacting occupational therapy, and the fourth theme is related to having pride and confidence in the profession. Through MiOTA’s and AOTA’s annual conference, MiOTA’s monthly webinars, SIS meetings, and chapter meetings members of the profession can share knowledge and engage in critical discussions. These events also provide opportunities to develop professional support networks, friendships, and mentoring relationships. The work done by members of our professional associations helps to improve our visibility and standing with other professions and with the public.

The continued success, recognition and growth of our profession depends on the actions we take. Occupational therapy month is a great time to get involved in our state and national associations. Markova, et al. (2013) found that members that were more involved in their association were more satisfied with it. OT month is also a great time to share with your OT colleagues the importance of membership.

References:
Markova, G., Ford, R., Dickson, D., & Bohn, T. (2013). Professional associations and members’ benefits: What’s in it for me? Nonprofit Management and Leadership, 23(4), 491-510.
Walder, K., Bissett, M., Molineux, M., & Whiteford, G. (2021). Understanding professional identity in occupational therapy: A scoping review. Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy, 29(3), 175–197. [https://doi.org/10.1080/11038128.2021.1974548](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdoi.org%2F10.1080%2F11038128.2021.1974548&data=05%7C02%7Ckallen.a.wolfer%40wmich.edu%7C6a40f8fe055e467f94fd08dd80c70010%7C257622517aa94c72905f39bf026a8a84%7C0%7C0%7C638808314522964761%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=t55C0msp1KW%2B7gRX0kkS2xcLlRHAYCKvUEETlq9HDD8%3D&reserved=0)