

NEWS FROM MEMBER ORGANISATIONS – DECEMBER 2011

AUSTRIA

Presentations and workshops of Occupational Therapists newly offered in the catalog for “Health Communities” in Upper Austria.

Several presentations and workshops offered by different health professions are registered in the catalog for “Health Communities”. This catalogue serves as a service for local communities, which can pick suitable offers for their citizens. The focus of the catalogue changes every two years. The year 2012/13 is devoted to “work and health”. Here citizens are supported in maintaining a good work - life balance. The program is funded by the Austrian government, which supports local communities in this prevention program.

Occupational therapists participate with three different workshops in this catalogue. The first workshop focuses on ergonomic support in family home care. Here caring relatives will be trained in ergonomic work movements to avoid later health problems.

The second workshop deals with maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Participants shall learn how to deal with daily physical stress. Here we present different techniques to avoid the damaging influence of stress.

The third workshop focuses on the occupational balance at work. The header of this workshop is “salutogenesis”. Here the main aim is to help people increase their well-being at work.

Results of Health Project in Upper Austria to detect developmental delays of children aged 4 to 5

In autumn 2010, 620 children were examined in 40 kindergarten institutions by specially trained occupational therapists. The test program included a questionnaire for the pediatric staff as well as the parents. Furthermore occupational therapists examined gross and fine motor skills, cognitive abilities and social behaviour. Different series of tests, such as Miller Assessment for Preschoolers (MAP) and Movement Assessment Battery for Children (Movement ABC), were used as well as clinical observations. The results of these tests can be summarised as follows: 25 % of the tested children required occupational therapy, 35% had minor deficiencies and their parents were advised in developmental support. 0% without pathological findings.

These tests will be established in all kindergarten in Upper Austria. The project will be supported by the Upper Austrian government until 2013.

ICELAND

Icelandic Occupational Therapy Association celebrating the 35th anniversary

This year, 2011, the Icelandic Occupational Therapy Association is celebrating the 35th anniversary and also this year 10 years have passed since the first Occupational Therapists students graduated from The University of Akureyri.

Starting the education here in Iceland marked a milestone in the history of the profession and the numbers of Occupational Therapists graduated have doubled since then and will increase rapidly in the coming years. Occupational Therapists have really marked them self as a profession in the society and have with inventiveness, spine and knowledge created attractive therapeutic solutions and built up powerful job opportunities for occupational therapists.

The association had a pin made to mark the day, besides that the association published a brochure to introduce the profession for students and others who would like to learn about the profession.

This year we also published the first Icelandic book on "Occupational Therapy". This is a great asset for occupational therapists and the society. Publishing the book is another milestone in the development of the Occupational Therapy profession and shows that the Icelandic Occupational Therapists are skilful and professional. Behind this task went enormous work and efficiency which reflects the ambition to publish a thorough and informative book that describes the position the Icelandic Occupational Therapists is in today.

AOTEAROA – NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (NZAOT)'s biennial Clinical Workshops

The event was held in the Bay of Islands at Waitangi in early November. The welcoming powhiri took place in Te Tiriti o Waitangi Marae, followed by a guided tour for delegates through the historic Treaty Grounds. Under the theme of "Baskets of Knowledge – Nga Kete o te Matauranga", the workshops focused on competence in the scope of practice of occupational therapy, with four sub-themes: Firm Foundations, Standing Tall, Grass Roots and Nurturing Knowledge. At the association's Annual General Meeting, Rita Robinson became president and Merrolee Penman was elected to the role of delegate to the World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

The prestigious Frances Rutherford Lecture Award 2012 has been awarded to Jane Hopkirk, for her significant contribution to the profession in Aotearoa. Jane is the first Māori occupational therapist to receive the award and it was particularly fitting that this should take place in Waitangi, the bi-cultural birthplace of our nation. The Medical Staffing International/NZAOT Occupational Therapy Achievement Award was won by Dr Fiona Graham for her work in the development of occupational performance coaching and intervention in the field of working with parents of children with disability.

The New Zealand Journal of Occupational Therapy is published bi-annually and the latest edition, Vol 58(2), includes excellent research articles by New Zealand and international authors on key topics that are grounded in practice and will be of interest and value to many. NZAOT invites our international colleagues to visit the website www.nzaot.com for Author's Guidelines, other details and as well to "sample" articles from previous publications.

Special interest groups (SIGS) are a strong feature of occupational therapy life in New Zealand for NZAOT members. The 18 online email and web based discussion forums cover a wide range of practice areas. The last three to be initiated during 2011 are: hand therapy, acute care (mental and physical health) and occupational therapy sustainability, with its focus on health and well being, looking after our world and protecting it into the future.

NZAOT's biennial Conference "Fresh Perspectives" is scheduled for 19-21 September 2012 in Hamilton. Abstracts are invited for presentations, workshops, panel discussions and posters and should reflect the following themes - *Fresh perspectives on: people's occupational development; claiming professional power; existing practice; the profession's scope; occupation; community and societal involvement; responsiveness to Māori.* Submissions should be made by 31 December 2011 and abstract acceptance will be confirmed by March 2012. Visit www.nzaotevents.com for more details. The host city, Hamilton, is in the north island, set within the lush farmlands of the Waikato region and serviced by arguably the largest hospital in Australasia. The conference will be in the spring, with its new growth and returning warmth and a lovely time for international colleagues to travel to Aotearoa and to take a leisurely look round. *We would welcome the opportunity to share this event with you!*

SOUTH AFRICA

South African therapists take on the rural challenge

Despite its urbanised, middle-income image, nearly half (43%) of South Africa's population lives in rural areas. The majority of this group live below the poverty line, have formidable health and social needs, and depend on scarce and often poorly organised state services for healthcare. Very few occupational therapists choose to work and live in rural areas, and for those who do, both professional and personal support are hard to come by.

In September this year, a small group of rural occupational therapists, physiotherapists and speech therapists joined with the Rural Doctors Association of South Africa (RuDASA) for their annual conference, as it hosted its first ever rehabilitation and disability track. Twenty therapists from around the country attended, and every session was filled – both with fascinating presentations and interested doctors! The first session addressed the role of therapists in HIV/AIDS, ranging from screening for HIV encephalopathy in infants to collaboration with traditional healers to promote HIV awareness. The second showcased innovative practice in service delivery for children, and the final session looked at assistive devices in rural areas. A mix of research and experience, from both state and non-governmental therapists, all three categories featured the importance of prevention, health promotion and early intervention, and highlighted the challenges of a growing burden of disability with the increasing survival of high-risk infants and people living with HIV/AIDS.

During every lunch and tea break, this small group of passionate therapists could be seen huddled together discussing submissions on new primary care-oriented health policy (in which rehabilitation and disability are nearly absent), as well as how to take forward the collaboration between rural practitioners from around the country. It was decided to form an organisation in parallel with RuDASA, with the aims of mutual support, sharing of resources, and advocacy with Government, professional bodies and universities for rural rehabilitation. A website has already been set up on which resources such as research articles and assessment tools can be posted (www.ruralrehab.co.za), and an active email group has continued the discussions since the conference. For more information, or to join our network, please contact kate.sherry@gmail.com.

UNITED KINGDOM

Progression and promotion of the profession continues.

The British Journal of Occupational Therapy (BJOT) is in the process of gaining an impact factor and has been successful in its first application to the Thomas Reuter's, Web of Knowledge Journal Citation Reports database. Its first impact factor is anticipated in summer 2012, BJOT looks forward to receiving manuscripts from an increasing number of researchers completing high quality research for publication. As a member of the BJOT International Advisory Board, Professor Mary Law is guest editing a special issue – 'Participation in Occupations Across the Lifespan' – deadline for submissions 20/01/12.

Sadly our Occupational Therapy services have been affected by many of the service cuts that have been made in this time of economic recession. The British Association of Occupational Therapists (BAOT) and Unison (our Trade Union) have been working together to speak out against damaging cuts and restructuring to local services. The Health and Social Care Bill 2011 was introduced in January 2011. It proposes major transformation to the way in which services are commissioned in the National Health Services (NHS) in England (one of the major employers of occupational therapists in the UK). Its introduction has caused widespread concern amongst health and social care professionals, including occupational therapists. Occupational Therapists have been vocal on the NHS Future Forum (set up as part of the 'listening exercise') as the progress of the Bill has been paused through Parliament. Of primary concern is the omission of allied health professionals (AHPs) on the commissioning groups. BAOT's Chief Executive, Julia Scott, with the Allied Health Professionals Federation, has been meeting with health ministers to lobby for changes to the Bill. Ballots for industrial action are taking place.

Occupational Therapists continue to work in diverse and emerging roles in the United Kingdom. With cuts to some services in the NHS and social care settings, Occupational Therapists are being creative in bringing their skills and experience to new and exciting roles in a wider range of employment settings implementing their unique, occupation-focused approach.

The BAOT Annual conference will take place in Glasgow 12-14 June 2012, the 80th anniversary year of occupational therapy in Scotland (for information please visit: www.cot.org.uk/annualconferences).

Finally, the BAOT has moved into its refurbished premises in London. We look forward to greeting our international colleagues when they come to visit.