A Unique Avenue to Independence

Approximately one million Americans currently reside in senior care facilities; this number is projected to almost double by 2030. As more individuals participate in this transition, the need for thorough, honest, and sincere assistance will continue to increase. Through his company, St. George Senior Living, Pitt MOT alumni, Kyle Johnston, MOT, OTR/L ('14) has developed a solution to this overwhelming component of geriatric care while highlighting the distinct value of occupational therapists as advocates.

St. George Senior Living offers a free-to-the-consumer guide to choosing the best assisted living community for a loved one. Kyle developed a three-step method for identifying the best fit location. Step one includes an initial consultation. During consultation, Kyle applies his skills as an OT, through client interview and administration of an occupation-based needs assessment. He states on his website, “Working directly with an occupational therapist will allow you to know what level of care is required by determining your loved one’s ADLs, General Mobility, Safety and Cognition.” Kyle then guides his clients in matching their needs to the right community using interpretation of the client’s level of care, application of the occupational profile, research, and observation skills unique to OTs.

The second step includes selecting and touring the client’s top five to six communities. During these visits, Kyle guides his clients in assessment of the context and environment of each community in relation to the wants and needs of the potential resident. His questions help clients determine if a community meets their values, beliefs and spiritual needs, while ensuring best care for any performance limitations.

In the final step, clients are encouraged and supported while making a best informed decision. In the end, Kyle has helped his clients find the perfect community while promoting the distinct value of OT.

A Leader Among Educators

On October 15th, at the Annual POTA Conference in Lancaster, PA, Pamela Toto, PhD, OTR/L, BCG, FAOTA was presented with the 2016 POTA Academic Educator Award. This award recognizes an occupational therapy educator who has consistently provided high quality education to occupational therapy and/or occupational therapy assistant students. Dr. Toto has long demonstrated a commitment to creativity and hands-on involvement in her teaching style that has facilitated the growth and success of her students.

Dr. Toto’s career has been shaped by the belief that occupational therapy holds the solution for older adults who wish to age in place. This, in turn, has influenced her teaching to one of mentorship and training of clinic leaders. She perceives occupational therapy students as future colleagues and promotes a collaborative learning model in which she serves as both an expert resource and a coach. Viewed as trustworthy and approachable, Dr. Toto facilitates the transition from adult learner to master clinician with excellence.
From the Chair...

The 2016-2017 Academic Year is off to a great start! Our students, faculty and staff are engaged in a number of exciting activities inside and outside the classroom. This issue highlights a few of these activities—including student and faculty participation in the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Hill Day. University of Pittsburgh students and faculty have actively participated in this important event for five years, joining students, faculty, and AOTA staff from across the country to meet with elected representatives in Washington, DC. These advocates inform our elected representatives about the distinct value of occupational therapy and the importance of health policies that incorporate access to and payment for occupational therapy services for the populations that we serve. The value of this activity cannot be understated, as we seek to expand public awareness of occupational therapy and its benefits for societal health and wellness.

Public awareness of occupational therapy and its benefits is a priority world-wide. I recently represented AOTA at the International Symposium of the 50th Annual Congress of the Japanese Association of Occupational Therapy in Sapporo, Japan. I and my co-presenters from Japan and Singapore presented the history of occupational therapy in each of our nations, and our visions for the enhancement of occupational therapy in the future. Each presentation discussed the importance of engaging occupational therapy practitioners in science, education, and health policy to support world-wide access to and delivery of the highest quality occupation-based practice. We are fortunate at the University of Pittsburgh to be engaged with so many partners in this very meaningful endeavor.

Faculty Achievements

Presentations:
Joanne Baird presented a poster with Margo Holm (Professor Emerita), Joan Rogers (Professor Emeritus), Ketki Raina, and John O’Donnell on Simulation to Teach Patient Handling: The Role of Self-efficacy at the School of Medicine, Med Ed Day, Pittsburgh, PA.

Pamela Toto presented on Goal Setting and Goal Attainment: Old Concepts, New Approach to the UPMC Centers for Rehab Services Neuro, Vestibular and Geriatric Outpatient Services Division, Pittsburgh, PA.

Jennifer White presented on Occupational Therapy in the ICU: Occupation-based Early Mobility at the Annual POTA Conference in Lancaster, PA.

Grants:
Amit Sethi obtained funding from the Pitt Innovation Challenge to continue his work with I-HITS.

Amit Sethi obtained funding from the Center for Medical Innovation, University of Pittsburgh to study I-HITS: Individualized Hand improvement and tracking system for stroke.

Papers


Geriatric Interprofessional Training

Throughout the week of October 24, 10 MOT students participated in a skills course encouraging students from all health professions to learn screening tools that will enhance the interprofessional care of the geriatric population. This unique training was offered through the University of Pittsburgh Medical School. Led by CScD student, Kelly Dickson, MOT, OTRL, Pitt MOT students, Temitope Akanbi, Sarah Arndt, Kristen Bianco, Anne Chen, Leah McCarthy, Luree Miller, Erica Mollenkopf, Kaitlyn Rankin, Alexandra Ruth, and Casie Strausbaugh participated in this exciting opportunity.

This training program consisted of interactive lectures, small group case discussions, skills development, skills application/practice (i.e., practice short screens/assessments with older adults), site visits, and team-based learning/debates. This training also assisted students with acquiring advanced knowledge and skills that will enhance geriatric practice. While working in interprofessional teams, students gained an understanding of other disciplines’ unique contributions to the care of geriatric clients while demonstrating the distinct value of OT.
Student Spotlight: Leah McCarthy

Leah McCarthy is a second year MOT student and the first University of Pittsburgh player to earn the Collegiate Water Polo Association (CWPA) Women’s Collegiate Club Co-Scholar-Athlete of the Year (2015—2016). This Scholar-Athlete of the Year award recognizes an outstanding senior/graduate student-athlete who has achieved success in both the scholastic and athletic arenas while possessing a spirit which provides service to the community.

Leah’s service to the Pitt OT program as well as the Pittsburgh community is admirable. She currently serves as the Vice-President of the University of Pittsburgh Student Occupational Therapy Association. Her contributions to community service and outreach programs is tremendous. Leah volunteered at the Andy Warhol Museum Sensory Friendly event, as well as provided a hands-on OT experience for Pitt undergraduates at the Discover U event.

Leah has planned and led multiple craft and baking activities at the Ronald McDonald House of Pittsburgh and worked with the United Way to create a “Be My Neighbor Day” event in four different Pittsburgh communities. She has made blankets for the homeless and volunteered for Family Services of Western PA. Leah is also a member of Pi Theta Epsilon.

Congratulations, Leah! You make us Pitt Proud!

Students Making News

Alexandra Ruth (MOT ’17) received a George Carson Fellowship.

Samantha Chamberlin, Samantha Bowen, and Alice Li presented a poster presentation on Promoting Social and Educational Participation in At-risk Youth at the POTA Annual Conference in Lancaster, PA.

MOT students (’17) Stacey Sabu, Leah McCarthy, Casie Strausbaugh, and MOT students (’18) Anna Carlson, Stephanie Gorstein, Shelby Scott, Michelle Watson, and Maggie Yuhas, with faculty, Denise Chisholm, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, participated in the Hands-On Occupational Therapy Session for the Discover U program.

Hanna Morris (MOT ’17) was awarded the Jonas Salk Fellowship.

Brianna Garcia (MOT ’17) was awarded an AOTA E.K. Wise Scholarship.

Roxanna Bendixen, PhD, OTR/L and MOT students (’17) Rob Evans, Brianna Garcia, Kristy Guthrie, Kristen Kowalski, Leah McCarthy, and Luree Miller participated in the Andy Warhol Museum Sensory Friendly Event for adults, children and youth at the Andy Warhol Museum.

MOT students (’18) Kristin Brown, Ashley Conroy, Trisha Conte, Suzanne Davis, Elaine Elliott, Sara Ellis, Anna Gavin, Yocelin Hernandez-Rojero, and Maggie Yuhas, with faculty, Denise Chisholm, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, participated in the Hands-On Occupational Therapy Session for the Discover U program.

Bora Kim, Jessica Krausnick, Luc Leech, Morgan Leech, Lauren Lukacs, Josselyn Mackey, Keegan Marcanelli, Gabriella Mickey, Katie Mitchell, Kylee Moninger, Kelsey O’Brien, Kara Rigdon, Alexa Schreiber, Shelby Scott, Kelly Stipetich, Caitlin Smith, Amanda Stober, Sarah Walker, Michelle Watson, Emily Williams, Maggie Yuhas and Kelsey Zambraski participated in an adaptive sports program on campus.

Alumni Spotlight: Kailey Bedford, MOT, OTR/L

Kailey Bedford, MOT, OTR/L (MOT ’13) applies her skills as an occupational therapist throughout her professional roles and her personal contributions. As a hand therapist at The Orthopaedic Institute (TOI) in Gainesville, FL, Kailey collaborates with physicians to participate in the primary care of her clients.

Spending some of her time at a satellite TOI clinic, Kailey has brought innovation and occupational therapy together to transform this site into a thriving hand therapy center with consistent good reviews and patient satisfaction.

Kailey’s use of her OT skills does not end with her evaluation and treatment of clients. She is also the student coordinator for the OT department. She manages all students and volunteers from interviews, to acceptance, to scheduling. Recently, Kailey revamped the student program at TOI in order to create a more well-rounded experience, preparing students for entry-level Hand Therapy positions.

In 2015, Kailey helped organize a 5k to raise money for expenses involved in attempts to get Chloe’s Law passed in Florida legislature, which places more guardrails and/or barriers on roadways next to bodies of water in Florida to prevent driver drowning deaths.

Kailey states that she has “immense gratitude” for Pitt OT. She feels that the training in advocacy and focus in psycho-social factors of clients has helped to mold her into the therapist she is today, both in the clinic and in the world.

Congratulations, Kailey! You make us Pitt Proud!
On March 2, 2016 the Senate passed a bipartisan bill offered by PA Senator Toomey, Stopping Medication Abuse and Protecting Seniors Act as an amendment to the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act. In addition to decreasing illicit diversion and overprescribing of opioids and preventing the beneficiary practice of “doctor shopping,” Senator Toomey has identified a third prong to his proposed opioid addiction intervention.

This third prong, increasing access to quality treatment, requires the inclusion of occupational therapy services for successful outcomes. Occupational therapists can provide effective and valuable intervention in pain management and addiction recovery, while reducing the experience of disability. We are qualified as physical health practitioners in addition to being recognized as mental health providers. Occupational therapists use a holistic approach to treating the person. This positions us as an integral provider in the treatment of conditions contributing to the opioid epidemic in the United States.

As occupational therapists, we are called to the action of advocacy. We have modeled skilled abilities in both direct advocacy for our clients and training our clients in effective self-advocacy. However, we must not forget that it is equally important to advocate for our profession. Among the exciting pieces of proposed legislation discussed at AOTA Hill Day, there are two additional pieces of legislation that should excite us as OTs.

The Medicare Telehealth Parity Act of 2015 will expand coverage of telehealth services under Medicare. As occupational therapists it is valuable to work with our clients in their natural environments. However, due to a variety of circumstances, this is often not a viable option for our clients in rural and/or underserved areas. This act will not only remove geographical barriers, but also expand the list of providers to include additional disciplines, specifically, occupational therapy.

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Get Involved: Occupational Therapy in Legislation

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