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From the Program Director

2007 is here, the students are back and we are all going full swing. The beginning of the academic year is always full of busyness and unexpected things. Having 85 first year students is one of the surprises!

Despite some technical problems with the timetable and enrolment the first year group seems to have managed the transition into Uni life very well and show a very promising approach to their studies. I am sure they will all be keen to experience their first real taste of OT when they undertake their first placement later in the year. I hope those of you who haven't considered taking a first year student before will reconsider as finding places for 85 is certainly going to be a challenge! I have also reviewed the applications for the next intake of Graduate

Entry students commencing July 2007. The program also has a healthy number of applicants indicating that the profession is seen as an attractive career option and people do know what we are about.

Meanwhile, as one group starts, we have another chance to connect up with the group who finished in 2006. The Graduation ceremony takes place on 27 March and we will watch each graduate walk across stage in cap and gown to accept their parchment. I look forward to catching up with all of them and hearing about their first jobs. It is also a chance to meet with the postgraduate students who have completed their studies with us – sometimes this is the first time we meet face to face due to the program being delivered by distance.



Sue Gilbert-Hunt, Program Director

In the next edition of OT Program News I hope to update you on the curriculum reform processes and the proposed field work changes, but for now I need to prepare for my next session with the students.

In Profile - Jo McInnes



I joined the University of South Australia in January 2007 and currently contribute to the Occupational Therapy Program at undergraduate and graduate entry levels. I coordinate, and teach in, the courses covering issues of work and environment; and am involved in some

teaching input into other areas including neurological rehabilitation, enabling occupation, and the initial fieldwork placement later in the year for the Graduate Entry students.

I have worked in a variety of organisational types, spanning a multinational corporate organisation through to small business. These have included a range of funding mechanisms, including a State regulatory authority (WorkCover WA), government funded health service organisations, not for profit organisations, insurance-based funding, and project funded programs.

Following my undergraduate degree in Occupational Therapy from the Western Australian Institute of Technology, I have achieved a Masters in Health Sciences (Occupational Therapy) at UniSA, and a Masters in Business Administration at Curtin University

of Technology in Perth. Over the years, I have also been involved in various voluntary activities to assist the profession at State level. I am currently a member of the OT Australia-SA State Conference Convening Committee, and contribute time to assist in some WFOT projects and document revisions, including membership of WFOT's project team concerning Disaster Preparedness & Response.

Outside of work, I can be found haunting small cafes (with a good book, or my family), or interacting with the 2 loveliest senior citizens in my life (which includes my mother, and Galileo, my lilac Burmese cat).

I look forward to (continuing to) work with the OT profession in South Australia, nationally, and globally. We really do have a great profession, jam-packed full of opportunities to help the world become a better place!

"Patience
is the
companion
of wisdom"

Saint Augustine

Field Practice Update *Alison Lane*

The field practice year is well underway with our first block of 3rd year undergraduate students currently on placement, 4th year undergraduates implementing PCP projects and graduate-entry 2nd year students finalising their projects. We are still requiring offers for some of our placements later in the year. Specifically, we need placements for:

- FP100 (1st year undergraduate) August or November blocks – 20 offers needed
- FP300 (3rd year undergraduate) 23rd April to 8th June (2nd block) – 7 offers needed
- FP401 (final year undergraduate) 16th July to 21st Sept – 10 -12 offers needed
- FP1 (graduate entry) 1 day/week for 8 weeks July to December - any offers please contact us
- FP2 (graduate entry) 18th June to 30th July – 6 offers needed
- FP4 (final year graduate entry) 2nd April to 29th June – 3 offers needed

We have a number of students in final year courses who have requested part-time placements due to family commitments. If any of you are able to offer a part-time placement (3 days/week or 4-5 short days) please contact me to discuss further: Alison 8302 2485.

This year, many of you will come in contact with the new Clinical Placement Unit for the first time. This unit has been established across the Schools of Health Science, Nursing and Pharmacy to streamline some of the administrative processes associated with field practice. Netta Russell, who many of you have come to know well over the years, relocated to the unit when it was established last year. She has decided, however, to move on to newer pastures and will be leaving the University on the 9th March. We will miss her greatly and want to publicly acknowledge the fantastic work she has done to assist in the running of OT field placements over the years. We wish her well in the future. Emma Owens, will be the interim contact for OT-related field practice matters (Clinical Placement Unit – 8302 2064).

The field practice working group has not met this year but will meet in the coming months to discuss and plan for a change of the program structure to enable most placements to be completed in the final year. Additionally, occupational therapists employed in mental health have established a student education program which will rotate through the year and be available to all students on placement in mental health areas. This update on mental health initiatives was provided by Dan Donaghey:

We are trying to boost the number of Mental Health OT placements offered in order to increase demand for Mental Health jobs. Our first step in this is to organise fortnightly tutorials for students on Mental Health placements as a way of broadening their experience and also taking some pressure off supervisors. We have negotiated with Spencer Gulf Rural Health School to fund and provide a room for videoconference access for country based students to be involved. At present there will not be any of these until the Grad Entry 2 placements so the tutes for the first half of the year will be at Glenside. The presenters are people from the Mental Health interest group who have volunteered.

OT Australia Student Rep at UniSA

Well, we are almost a quarter of the way through this year already! Some of us have been back to study for a while, and some of you will have only recently commenced your year, but to everyone, all the best.

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Joel Edson, and I am a 4th year Occupational Therapy student. I also currently hold the position of Student Representative on the OT Australia, SA Council. This role is to provide a student voice to the Association to ensure that we (the students), as the future of the profession, have input into the direction of, and issues relating to the profession. This is the first full year that students have had representation on the council, and the role of the student representative is in its early days. Over time, the role will become more defined in terms of responsibilities and courses of action.

We all understand the financial issues related to studying, but the benefits of membership in terms of professional development, workshop and conference discounts are worthwhile, particularly for those of you in your 3rd or 4th year. Our state association offers yearly student membership for \$50, which can be paid quarterly (that's less than \$1/week). For more information on membership and benefits, check out the website at www.otsa.org.au.

The Association has shown a genuine interest in issues faced by students, and is extremely responsive and active in addressing the needs of students. I feel that we are lucky to have a representative association interested in our needs, and feel that we should make the most of our opportunities to be heard.

If you have any queries or issues please feel free to email me at: edsja001@students.unisa.edu.au, or phone 0412189343.



Joel Edson, OT Australia SA
Student Representative

In the Loop - Evidence-Based Practice Alison Lane

Have you ever been confronted by a situation in your clinical practice where you wonder if there is something else that you could be doing that would be more effective than your current approach? Most of us would have experienced this situation at least once in our careers. In the past, we would have dealt with this issue by: talking to our fellow OT's to see if there were other techniques that might be appropriate to use, consulting our Uni textbooks (after dusting them off first!) or even attending a workshop or seminar about the issue if there happened to be one planned at the time we were confronted with the problem. In this new era of evidence-based practice, these strategies are no longer sufficient by themselves to maintain currency of practice and provide the best service to our clients. Evidence-based practice is:

"the conscientious, explicit, and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients. The practice of evidence-based medicine (health care) means integrating individual clinical expertise with the best available external clinical evidence from systematic research." (Sackett et al, 1996).

Having started as a framework to teach medical students in Canada, evidence-based practice has evolved into the most dominant worldwide health care paradigm of the last decade. Evidence-based practice is considered important because it:

- **Helps define the most efficient and effective method of practice**
- **Provides justification of services for management and funding bodies**
- **Provides accountability to patients and their families that you are 'doing the right thing right' (Gray, 1997)**
- **Provides an important link between practice and research**
- **Ensures quality services.**

Evidence-based practice poses two challenges for the occupational therapy profession. First, it challenges us to change our way of reflecting on practice to incorporate research evidence **in addition to** expert opinion and previous experience in our decision-making about client care. Second, evidence-based practice challenges us to **look for and carry out** research on the effectiveness of occupational therapy practices in achieving desired outcomes. To meet these challenges, the curriculum in the Occupational Therapy programs at UniSA includes a strong focus on evidence-based practice and research skills. It is our aim to develop graduates who can source and critically appraise relevant literature with a view to applying knowledge gained from literature to practice. We also encourage students to consider active participation in research as a legitimate and valued occupational therapy career.

Evidence-based practice is a methodology developed for use in practice rather than academic contexts although it is now consistently used in both. The evidence-based practice process consists of four steps:

1. **Asking the question** – a pertinent clinical question based on a problem you see in client care e.g. What process of therapy is likely to be most effective with this client?
2. **Finding the evidence/information** – sourcing up-to-date and relevant literature that specifically addresses your clinical problem. Properly conducted clinical studies published in journals are generally weighted more heavily than text book references or expert opinion as they are often more recent and have been exposed to peer review.

3. **Evaluate/appraise the literature** – reading and critiquing the literature for its usefulness to your clinical context and validity. Standard evidence-based practice hierarchies of evidence typically rank empirically-based studies e.g. randomised controlled trials, case-control studies, more highly than naturalistic/qualitative studies e.g. studies that analyse narratives for themes in content. However, the relevance of the study to your clinical context is an equally important consideration when evaluating evidence.
4. **Implement useful findings in clinical practice** – this is the most important step. Useful findings from your review of the literature should be incorporated into your practice – with one client, a group of clients or across the whole service.

Becoming an evidence-based occupational therapist requires habit change. An evidence-based occupational therapist will: **reflect** on their practice and ask clinical questions, take time to **find** the best evidence in relation to practice, **appraise** the evidence rather than just taking it at face value, and will **use** the evidence to make change in the practice (Holm, 2000). In the context of a busy clinical and administrative workload, evidence-based practice often seems daunting. To get started, here are a few ideas that can be readily incorporated into practice:

- **Read** – OT journals and relevant medical/other journals – look for on-line subscription options that can alert you via email when articles of relevance to your area are published.
- **Start a journal club** – with fellow OT's (either at your organisation or across organisations) and multi-D team members. Talking with others about a journal article will help hone your critical appraisal skills and generate more ideas for practice change. Journal clubs don't need to be face-to-face but could be set up via email if necessary.
- **Use students to assist you to stay current** – final year students in both undergraduate and graduate-entry programs at UniSA are required to complete an evidence-based practice review as part of their final placement. This is an opportunity for you to have a dedicated resource to source and appraise literature of direct relevance to your workplace. Third year undergraduate students also have this skill at a beginning level and could carry out an abbreviated version of an evidence-based review while on placement.

"The good you do today maybe quickly forgotten, but the impact of what you do will never disappear"

Anonymous

For more information on evidence-based practice and research curriculum in the occupational therapy programs at UniSA or for other evidence-based practice resources, please contact Alison Lane, alison.lane@unisa.edu.au OR 08 8302 2485.

References

- Gray, JAM (1997). *Evidence-based healthcare: How to make health care policy and management decisions*. New York: Churchill Livingstone.
- Holm, MB (2000). *Our mandate for a new millennium: Evidence-based practice, 2000 Eleanor Clarke Slagle Lecture. American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 54, 575-585.*
- Sackett, DL et al (1996). *Evidence-based medicine: what it is and what it isn't. British Medical Journal, 312, 71-2.*



Enabling the Future The Next 10 Years

25th – 26th October 2007
Holiday Inn on Hindley
Adelaide, South Australia

OT AUSTRALIA SA is pleased to welcome delegates from all professions involved in the health and wellbeing of our community to the 10th State Occupational Therapy Conference. The conference will provide participants with an opportunity to engage in dialogue and debate regarding the future of the health and wellbeing of society over the next 10 years.

More information available at www.otsa.org.au

UniSA Success in Research Funding

In 2007, a number of research projects involving staff in the UniSA Occupational Therapy Program have been successful in gaining funding. Details of the projects follow:

Alison Lane

Lane, AE, Angley, M, Young, R & McKinnon, R (2006). *Augmenting an autism phenotyping tool with sensory processing information*. Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation, \$9 000.

This grant will fund the continuation of research begun by Amy Baker (an OT Honours student in 2006). The research will track the typical patterns of sensory processing exhibited by school-aged children with autistic disorder and investigate the presence of sensory processing patterns. These patterns will then be matched with other characteristics of the children e.g. behaviour, emotional responsiveness and genomic and metabonomic profiles to determine the existence of distinct, observable phenotypes (subtypes) within autism. This research involves the unique collaboration between occupational therapy, psychology and biomedical sciences. It is hoped this research will contribute to the earlier diagnosis and more effective treatment of children with autistic disorders.

Lane, AE, Raghevedra, P, Olsson, C & Connell, T (2006). *Participation profiles of children with complex communication needs*. Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation, \$31 000.

This grant will fund a project being conducted in collaboration with Novita Children's Services. The research will describe the typical time use, activity engagement and social networks of young people with physical disabilities (with and without complex communication needs). In particular, the study will attempt to understand how satisfied these young people are with their daily activity participation and social interactions. Comparisons will be drawn with a similarly aged group of children without disabilities. It is

hoped that this research will give service providers greater insight into the participation needs of children with significant disability and provide direction for the development of interventions that can address these.

Murchland, S, Garrett, R, Lane, AE, Tillbrook, A & Van DeLoo, S. *Assistive Technology Solutions for Students with Physical Disabilities: an analysis of utility, costs, and student satisfaction – Year 2 funding*. Channel 7 Children's Research Foundation, \$30 000.

This grant will fund a project being led by occupational therapy and technology staff at Novita Children's Services. The research aims to understand the usage of and satisfaction with assistive technology prescribed to children with physical disabilities for the purpose of assisting with school performance. A comparison of actual technology against recommendations for provision, and costs for providing equipment and support will also be undertaken. It is hoped that the project will provide occupational therapists with an evaluation of the relative effectiveness of prescribed equipment and prescription processes.

Mandy Stanley

Cheek, J, Moyle, W, Ballantyne A, Stanley, M, Corlis, M. & Oxlade, D. (2007-09) *Alone in a Crowd*, Australian Research Council Linkage grant \$150,000 and Industry partners \$148,000

The study consists of two parts, with the first part involving in-depth interviews of older people, and focus groups with service providers and older people to try and gain an in-depth understanding of what loneliness is. Based on that understanding the second part aims to work with service providers in developing programs that might better manage loneliness and trial some programs with the industry partners. The study will be conducted in South Australia and in Queensland with our Industry partners at Helping Hand Aged Care, Southern Cross Homes, ECH and RSL Care.

Love of Research leads to PhD Rebecca Taylor

I completed my OT undergraduate degree with honours at UniSA in 2005. At the beginning I found the idea of completing my honours very daunting but I soon began to enjoy the constant challenges and knowing that my research was filling a gap in the literature.

For the past year I have worked at Mildura Base Hospital in Victoria, where I was responsible for a mixed case load, including work in the acute medical and surgical wards, rehabilitation ward and outpatient hand therapy. I particularly enjoyed working on the rehabilitation ward and being able to assist clients to return home to their family, especially when this seemed at first to be unlikely. While in Mildura I learnt a great deal both professionally and personally but found that I missed being involved in research!

I have now returned to Adelaide to undertake my PhD. At this stage my project aims to describe the relationship between health status, quality of life, health service utilisation and patterns of activity engagement and time use in young people with and without physical restrictions. However, this may change slightly over the next few months as I continue to review literature. While I am going through this process I will also be a tutor for Enabling Occupation 100. I look forward to this new challenge and to meeting and sharing my experiences with the first year OT students.



Rebecca Taylor, PhD Student

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www.unisa.edu.au/hls/progscourses/ot.asp



Farewell to Netta

After 18 years with UniSA, Netta Russell, our esteemed Field Placement Administrator, has decided to call it a day and move on to greener pastures. Whether you are a student, past or present, or a practitioner, many of you would have come to know Netta over the years as she managed the very complex task of securing field placements for our occupational therapy students.

With her "nothing is too much trouble" work ethic, she has always been a true professional and an absolute delight to work with. Netta will be very sorely missed by all the staff in the Occupational Therapy program, but we wish her all the very best in her new endeavours.