



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS REGISTRATION BOARD NEWSLETTER

Produced by the Occupational Therapists Registration Board of Western Australia **ISSUE No. 10**
PO Box 1182 West Perth WA 6872 Phone (08) 9481 6599 Fax (08) 9321 2119 **December 2001**

WHO IS ON THE BOARD?

Ms. Helen Morton Dip (OT) WAIT 1970
Chairperson
General Manager at Armadale Health Service
Nominated by the Permanent Head of the Health Department of Western Australia

Ms. Sally Wojnar-Horton B App Sc (OT)
WAIT 1974; Grad Dip Hlth Sc 1981; M Hlth Sc 1991
Head of Department at Princess Margaret Hospital
Nominated by OT Australia WA

Ms. Linda Mason B App Sc (OT) WAIT 1978;
MHSc (OT) Sth Aust 1996;
Lecturer, School of Occupational Therapy,
Curtin University of Technology
Nominated by Curtin University of Technology

Mr. Kerry Jones B App Sc (OT) WAIT 1978;
Grad Dip Hlth Sc Ed (Curtin) 1985
Private Practitioner
Nominated by OT Australia WA

Dr. Robert Chandler MBBS (West Aust)
1977: FRACGP; D Obst, R.C.O.G.; Post Grad Dip
Hlth Sc (Curtin) 1995; M Sc (Curtin) 1999;
Medical Practitioner
Nominated by the Minister for Health

Ms. Thelma Burnett Assoc OT WAIT 1969;
B App Sc (OT) (Curtin) 1977; Grad Dip Hlth Sc (Curtin)
1981; Master of Science (Hlth Sc) (Curtin) 1993
Senior Occupational Therapist in Primary
Health at Swan Health Service (currently
Executive Officer of Swan and Kalamunda
Health Services)
Nominated by OT Australia WA

ADMINISTRATION/ CONTACTING THE BOARD

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CHARTER AND ROLE OF THE BOARD

The Occupational Therapists Registration Board of Western Australia was established in 1958 to administer the provisions of the Occupational Therapists Act.

The Board is a Statutory Authority in Western Australia responsible to Parliament via the Minister for Health for the administration of the Act, which provides for the registration of occupational therapists, regulation of the practise of occupational therapy and for other related purposes.

The Board administers its role in protecting the interests of the public by:

- (a) the registration and professional discipline of occupational therapists;
- (b) exercising a general overview of the standards of occupational therapy practise;
- (c) the investigation and prosecution of summary offences under the Act; and
- (d) exercising the other functions assigned to it by or under the Act.

The Board exercises its functions under the Act with a view to achieving and maintaining professional standards of competence and conduct in the practise of occupational therapy.

CRIMINAL RECORD SCREENING

The Board has entered into an arrangement with the Health Department of Western Australia to conduct criminal record screening of all registered occupational therapists.

In the initial stages, all new applicants will be required to be screened at the time of applying for registration, and over a period of four (4) years, all those occupational therapists currently on the Register will be required to complete the screening process. Repeat screening of all occupational therapists will be required every four (4) years.

When you are selected to undergo the process, the Board will forward to you an information sheet and a Consent Form, which will need to be completed and forwarded direct to the Criminal Record Screening Support Unit accompanied by your payment.

The criminal screening process is compulsory, and all occupational therapists are required to comply.

WEBSITE

The Board is in the process of establishing a website which will be located at "www.otregboardwa.com.au"

Details of registration requirements, policies, application forms and general information will be available on this site. It is hoped that this will be up and running by the end of 2001.

PRACTISE AUDITS

All overseas qualified occupational therapists must first have a desktop assessment of their qualifications and experience conducted by the Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards (Australia and New Zealand) Inc (COTRB).

If the desktop assessment is acceptable, the applicants will be required to undertake a practise audit of six months during their first year of employment in Australia. The Overseas Qualifications Assessment Committee (OQAC) appoints an administering body to ensure that the audited practise audit is conducted according to the specifications within the plan and in Western Australia the Board undertakes this role.

On successful completion of the practise audit, the Board is required to make a recommendation to the COTRB on whether the practise audit plan has been completed satisfactorily and whether a Certificate of Professional Competency should be issued to the applicant. Subject to the applicant being issued with the Certificate of Professional Competency, the Board would then be in a position to grant full unconditional registration.

The purpose of the practise audit is to promote competence of the overseas-educated OT to practise in the Australian context. In most cases, audited practise is consistent with normal supervision/performance management procedures. Nevertheless, COTRB and the Board need to be assured that the practise of overseas-educated therapists is audited for the equivalent of six months full-time practise during their first year of employment in Australia.

More detailed information about the COTRB, OQAC assessment process and the practise audit is available from the Council's web site at "www.cotrb.com.au"

THE BENEFITS OF REGISTRATION

What is the benefit of registration?

This is a commonly asked question.

The Western Australian public is entitled to be provided with health services of the highest possible standard. Statutory regulation of the health professions plays a vital role in ensuring that appropriate standards of health care practise are achieved and maintained.

The main purpose of statutory regulation of the health professions is therefore to protect the public from inadequately trained or incompetent practitioners. Registration achieves this objective in a number of ways. Firstly, it provides a visible assurance of minimum standards of competence and training. Secondly, it prevents or restricts practise by unregistered and unqualified practitioners; and thirdly, it provides a mechanism through which poor conduct or incompetence of practitioners can be reported. The focus of registration of health practitioners is on maintenance of standards and protection of the public interest, rather than on punishment or the resolution of disputes.

Public Benefits

The public benefit arises mainly from protection against risks to public health and safety and maintenance of standards. It is assumed that the promotion and maintenance of high professional standards results in better health outcomes for consumers. Registration provides information about practitioners, if a person has the qualifications for registration, the consumer has an indication of the standard of service to be expected. Registration provides some guarantee that the practitioner will conform to a basic level of skills necessary for safe treatment and, in some registration systems, provide a guarantee that a practitioner's skills will be maintained at a particular standard. The Board has made recommendations to the Government that ongoing competence be specifically addressed in proposed amending legislation.

A common characteristic of registration schemes is the requirement that registrants must be of "good fame and character" or a "fit and proper person". A requirement such as this is aimed at ensuring that the consumer will be treated honestly and fairly, and that the practitioner will be competent in his/her practise and will behave ethically.

Importance to the Profession

Regulated professions derive a number of benefits from statutory regulation, even though registration is introduced to serve the public interest rather than professional interests. These benefits include increased status and professional recognition, quality

control, an improved competitive position compared with those who are not registered and, in some cases, a statutory monopoly over the provision of particular services.

RESEARCH GRANTS

The Board will once again consider applications from registered occupational therapists for research grants for 2002. Application forms can be obtained from the office of the Board and should be lodged prior to 28 February 2002.

One application was approved for 2001, however the project has not yet commenced. Reports on ongoing research projects are itemised below.

Caroline Matthews, Sally Wojnar-Horton, Margaret Duckworth and Janet Summers Research project titled "OT Paediatric Services in WA: - a demographic survey of staffing patterns and service delivery"

Most of the data has been analysed but there are a few areas that require some rework and clarification. Highlights from the data were presented at the recent Paediatric Occupational Therapy Conference in Sydney in September this year.

Points of interest from the survey are:

- *Most occupational therapy time is spent on providing services to children, age range 6-12 years.*
- *The majority of practitioners responding worked in the metropolitan area.*
- *More than half of the respondents had graduated less than 10 years ago.*
- *45% of respondents had less than 5 years experience in paediatric occupational therapy.*
- *36% of respondents had a mixed caseload in paediatrics and adult services.*
- *Occupational therapists reported a lack of available therapy hours and resources.*
- *Waiting lists for occupational therapy services were an issue.*

Therese Trouchet

Research project titled "The effect of pre and post operative exercise on functional and health outcomes following Total Hip Replacement"

Ms. Therese Trouchet advised that her Masters Thesis has been submitted, based on the findings of 68 patients who have undertaken total hip replacement. She is also in the process of writing a journal for publication in the near future.

Ms. Trouchet has informed the Board that she is currently on extended maternity leave and has relocated to Canada for one year. She has now handed the co-ordination of the project over to Terri Richardson, an occupational therapist at Hollywood Private Hospital, who has met with all the key personnel at both Hollywood Private Hospital, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital and other research members involved in the project.

Dr Margaret Ross

Research project titled "The Occupation of Quilting"

Dr. Margaret Ross provided the Board with the following final report on the above research project.

"This research project investigated the relationship between a leisure occupation and health. The study of the occupation of quilting has now been completed successfully.

The research design for the study used both qualitative (interview transcripts and participant observation) and quantitative methods (210 questionnaires distributed to city and country areas). Following detailed statistical and thematic analysis the findings were grouped into the following parts:

- *The characteristics of women who see themselves as quilters*
- *The reasons why women quilt*
- *The selection of quilting as a preferred leisure occupation*
- *The dimensions of the occupation and benefits of quilting*

Engagement in quilting appears to be important for two reasons; that of personal pleasure experienced during the creating process and the opportunity to form strong social connections and share with others. The implications from this research cover both the practise of occupational therapy and the demonstration of a process to study many other occupations.

A paper on the mental health aspects of this occupation was presented at the recent forum in Bunbury. A copy of this paper and further details of the research findings are available from the researchers."

Dr. Ross expressed her appreciation to the Board for supporting the research, and to Katie Hill for her commitment and significant contribution to completing the research, as well as special thanks to Vaile Drake and Dr. Tim Threlfall for their assistance.

MUTUAL RECOGNITION

- (a) Australian: Mutual Recognition of registration held in another State or Territory of Australia allows registered occupational therapists in good standing in Australia to gain registration immediately, subject to completing the appropriate application process.
- (b) Trans Tasman: Whilst Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition now operates between other States of Australia and New Zealand, this legislation has not yet been implemented in Western Australia.