



NEWSLETTER

Issue 11

Produced by the Occupational Therapists Registration Board of Western Australia • PO Box 959 South Perth WA 6951 • Phone (08) 9368 2655 • Fax (08) 9368 2677

MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD

The current membership of the Board and the Section of the Act they have been appointed under are as follows:

Ms Sally Wojnar-Horton

(Head of Department (OT), Women & Children's Health Service, Princess Margaret & King Edward Hospitals)
Nominated by OT Australia WA and appointed by the Minister for Health

Mr Kerry Jones

(Private Practitioner)
Nominated by OT Australia WA and appointed by the Minister for Health

Dr Robert Chandler

(Medical Practitioner)
Medical Practitioner nominated for appointment by the Minister for Health

At present, the Board is awaiting the appointment of three Board members by the Minister for Health. Their nominations will come from:

- The Permanent Head of the Health Department of Western Australia
- OT Australia WA
- Curtin University of Technology

ADMINISTRATION/CONTACTING THE BOARD

Kim Bradbury	Registrar
Vivien Collins	Administration
Phone:	9368 2655
Fax:	9368 2677
E-mail:	enquiries@otbwa.com.au
Website:	www.otbwa.com.au
Postal Address:	PO Box 959 SOUTH PERTH WA 6951
Street Address:	6 Charles Street SOUTH PERTH WA 6151

Office hours are Monday to Friday 8.30 am to 5.00 pm.

REGISTRATION NUMBERS

At the beginning of December 2002, the number of registered occupational therapists in Western Australia was 1148.

FEE SCHEDULE

The following fees are stipulated in the Act:

Registration Fees (GST Exempt)

Application Fee	\$60
Annual Practising Fee	\$60
Restoration – following voluntary removal from the Register	\$20
Penalty Restoration – following involuntary removal from the Register	\$35
Fine for Penalty Restoration – payment of each year's practising fee that the OT has been removed from the Register	

Administrative Fees (GST Exempt)

Change of Particulars	\$10
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CRIMINAL RECORD SCREENING

The Board continues in its policy to conduct criminal record screening of all registered occupational therapists.

Screening is required of all new applicants at the time of applying for registration and restoration to the Register. Over a four-year period, all those currently on the Register will be required to complete the screening process. Repeat screening of all those registered will be required approximately every fourth year.

If you have received an information and consent form for screening, you have either not been screened before and are required to be, or you are required to be re-screened. Those who have been screened in 1999 are required to be screened again. Please complete the form and forward it, with a cheque or money order for \$35, directly to the Criminal Record Screening Support Unit, the address of which is on the reverse of the Form.

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

TEMPORARY REGISTRATION

Temporary Registration as an occupational therapist in Western Australia is available in two circumstances.

In the first instance, an occupational therapist with overseas qualifications may obtain Temporary Registration as a first step towards obtaining full, unconditional registration. In order to be granted Temporary Registration, the occupational therapist would be required to arrange a suitable practice audit, submit this plan to COTRB, and COTRB would request that the Board administer the plan, at which time Temporary Registration would be granted.

On 12 June 2002, the Board revised its Policy regarding the Practice Audits that occupational therapists with overseas qualifications are required to complete before becoming eligible for full, unconditional registration.

Details of the Policy, also published on the Board's website, www.otbwa.com.au, appear below.

POLICY – OVERSEAS-TRAINED APPLICANTS

1. All overseas occupational therapists must be assessed by the COTRB before being eligible for registration. Refer www.cotrb.com
2. The COTRB first undertakes a desktop assessment of the applicants qualifications and experience, and if acceptable, they will provide the applicant with a copy of Practice Audit Guidelines and an Application Form to be completed and returned to COTRB with the Practice Audit Fee (currently AUD\$200)
3. The applicant will organise employment with an employer. The employer and applicant will together prepare a 6-month practice plan for the applicant, under the supervision of a registered occupational therapist, who shall provide the Board with 3-monthly reports on the standard of practise of the applicant.
4. The applicant must submit this practice plan to COTRB for approval by the Overseas Qualifications Assessment Committee (OQAC) of the Council.
5. OQAC will review the practice plan, and, upon approving it, will nominate an Administrator for the applicant to ensure that the practice plan is conducted according to the specifications within the approved plan, and in Western Australia the Board undertakes this role. COTRB will inform the applicant and the Board that the audit plan is approved.
6. The Board shall then grant Temporary Registration to the applicant for a period of up to 12 months.
7. On successful completion of the Practice Audit, the Board will be required to make a recommendation to the COTRB on whether a 'Certificate of Professional Competency' should be issued to the Applicant.
8. Subject to the Certificate of Professional Competency being issued, the Board would then grant full, unconditional Registration.

Where the policy references a "6-month practice plan", this applies to full time practice. Alternatively, a 12-month part time practice plan would be appropriate.

In many cases, employers who offer a position to an occupational therapist who must complete a Practice Audit, wish to offer a permanent position upon its satisfactory completion. In such cases, the occupational therapist may write to the Board to request an extension of his or her Temporary Registration, until a Certificate of Professional Competency is received from COTRB and may be presented to the Board with an application for full registration.

The second circumstance under which Temporary Registration may be granted is on an honorary basis for persons who may be visiting the State to attend a conference or conduct a workshop, and in any other way teach or demonstrate methods and techniques of occupational therapy. Temporary Registration, in this instance, may be granted for a period not exceeding 3 months, and this may be renewed by the Board for up to 12 months. The Board has the discretion to impose limitations and restrictions upon the practise of a therapist granted Temporary Registration, and similarly, may vary such limitations or even cancel the Temporary Registration.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS WORKING WHILST UNREGISTERED

A very strong case can be made for the importance of registration. For one thing, it allows the regulatory body to monitor and provide consistent standards of education and practice. Registration eliminates unqualified and unprofessional or incompetent persons practising as occupational therapists, thereby protecting the public. It also provides the public with an effective and inexpensive complaint mechanism.

What is not often realised by the profession, is that the Board exists primarily to protect the public. It is a common misconception among the profession that the Board represents and protects the interests of registered members. While in its ambit of protecting the public, the Act administered by the Board also protects all registered occupational therapists, it is the professional bodies, the Associations established by therapists, that represent their interests. The Associations, however, are not empowered to take action against unqualified persons who may set up a practice, or to prosecute registered occupational therapists who have breached the Act.

At present not every State and Territory registers occupational therapists. However, the Council of Occupational Therapists Registration Boards (Australia & New Zealand) is working hard to advocate registration throughout Australia, in the interests of promoting regulatory reform and uniform professional recognition, and to protect the health and safety of the Australian public. Registration of occupational therapists exists in most Western countries.

Probably the most important repercussion of non-registration is that the public is not protected. If one were to liken registration to licensing, and draw the corollary of a drivers' license – no responsible person would consider driving without a license. Similarly, you would be unlikely to employ an unlicensed electrician to undertake the electric wiring of your home. There is security in the knowledge that the system of licensing protects all on the road, gives an assurance about the qualifications of people who provide services and maintains credibility for the licensee.

This year, four cases where unregistered occupational therapists had worked, came to the Board's attention. The circumstances of each case varied.

Therapist A moved and forgot to notify the Board of the change of address. Mail was redirected for a period, but the Board's two reminders regarding renewal of registration were sent after mail redirection had ceased. Consequently, the letters did not reach Ms A, and she overlooked renewing her registration for 2002. In addition, Ms A had moved to Western Australia from Victoria, which does not have registration at present. She was unused to the requirement to renew registration annually.

Therapist B's situation was very similar. She had forgotten to inform the Board about a new address, and having previously been registered in the United Kingdom, was not familiar with the necessity to renew her practising certificate annually.

Therapist C did not believe that she was required to register to take up her first position upon graduating, as an Occupational Health & Safety Officer. When she later accepted a position as an occupational therapist, she had forgotten that registration was required, and did not liken registration to a 'license' to practice.

In Therapist D's case, she believed mistakenly that while she awaited the results of criminal record screening clearance, which is a prerequisite for registration, she was in the process of being registered, and in that mistaken belief she commenced a locum position.

In every instance, each person was in breach of the Act, and the Board could have instigated a criminal complaint in the Court of Petty Sessions, because each held herself out as an occupational therapist whilst unregistered.

The ramifications of a therapist performing duties whilst not 'licensed' are quite serious. The credibility of reports written by an unregistered occupational therapist, that are used from time to time in a court of law to ascertain costs for disabled people, could become questionable. There is also the issue of professional indemnity.

The accountability of a therapists' employer will also come into question, should there be instances of professional misconduct or should inappropriate treatment be administered by an unregistered occupational therapist. Under the Act, a registered occupational therapist who knowingly employs an unregistered occupational therapist would be liable to be prosecuted. From an employers perspective, the lack of a process or systematic check of current registration may be viewed as the employer not taking enough steps to ensure that they do not employ unregistered therapists.

In the cases reviewed by the Board this year, the Board decided to be lenient. However, the occupational therapists concerned were informed that in the event of a recurrence of the situation – that is, they were found to have been employed as therapists whilst not registered to practice – the Board would not hesitate to prosecute them through the Courts.

The Board also wrote to the employers of the occupational therapists in question, expressing concern, and seeking a written undertaking that systems and procedures would be implemented so that only registered occupational therapists were employed. Also, that in January each year, the employers would check with the Board that all occupational therapists employed had current registration.

It cannot be overemphasised that registration is the responsibility of the individual.

- ✓ Keep the Board informed of your current address. This may easily be managed by
 - emailing enquiries@otbwa.com.au , or
 - faxing the notification to **9368 2677**, or
 - mailing the notice to the Board at PO BOX 959, SOUTH PERTH WA 6951.
- ✓ Make a note on your calendar at work or at home that **31 December** of each year is the end of your license to practise.
- ✓ Pay your renewal regardless of whether you have received notice from the Board.

The Board's reminder is a courtesy, not an obligation. The obligation rests with you.

If you employ occupational therapists – fax or e-mail a list of your employees to the offices of the Board. Staff will be happy to confirm their registration status.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION TAKEN BY THE BOARD

The Board received a complaint in 2001 from the Physiotherapists' Registration Board of Western Australia regarding the conduct of an occupational therapist.

The Board conducted an Inquiry, and found the occupational therapist guilty of improper conduct in a professional respect by reason of impropriety, in that the person in question

- Used the term "physical and occupational therapist", and
- Used an ultrasound machine, a proclaimed method of practising physiotherapy, on a patient.

The Board reminds occupational therapists that they are not entitled to use the term 'physical therapy' or to use ultrasound or any other Proclaimed Method of Physiotherapy in the treatment of their patients. 'Proclaimed methods' include the use of a short wave or long wave diathermy machine, micro wave therapy machine, ultra sonic machine, faradic machine and galvanic machine.

RESEARCH GRANTS

The Board will once again consider applications from registered occupational therapists for research grants for 2003. Application forms and information concerning the conditions for the grant may be downloaded from the website at www.otbwa.com.au and should be lodged prior to 28 February 2003.

One application was approved for 2002, and the Research Grant awarded to Marina Wise, Lecturer, School of Occupational Therapy, Curtin University of Technology. The project was entitled "**Does The Use of New Information Technology Influence Variation in Posture Among Adults?**", and a report follows.

'The role of information and communication technology (ICT) in activities of daily living is evolving to encompass leisure and communication in addition to work tasks. The term 'new ICT' is used to refer to electronics-assisted interfaces, compared to traditional or 'old ICT' (e.g. paper and pencil tasks and hard copy reading.)

Concurrent with increased new ICT use is an increase in complaints associated with musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) among adult new ICT users. Poor work posture is a known risk factor for MSDs among computer operators, however as there is no single optimal posture, any posture held for long durations may result in discomfort and fatigue. Therefore lack of variation in posture and muscle activity may well explain the continued incidence of MSDs among office workers who work at well-designed workstations.

This study is investigating the monotony of upper quadrant posture of adults participating in new, old and non-ICT activities during work and non-work tasks during a 12-hour period. Data is being collected using a combination of surface electromyography, electrogoniometers and observation-based task analysis. Long duration monitoring of the 24 adult participants has commenced in 2002, with data analysis scheduled to begin in early 2003.'

Reports on ongoing research projects are itemised below.

Emily Crawford, Peter Hamer and Louise Payne Research Project entitled "**The Effects and Perceived Benefits of Night Time Positioning for Managing Positional Deformity in Children with Cerebral Palsy**" report:

'During September 2002, a reliability study was conducted to establish the inter and intra-rater reliability of the measuring board for the Goldsmith Index of Body Symmetry, one of the main assessments to be used in the project. This part of the study was carried out with the assistance of Nicole Separovich, a 4th year Occupational Therapy student from Curtin University. Assessments using the measuring board were carried out on 16 children with cerebral palsy and a control group of 16 children with no motor impairment. Analysis of the results is currently underway and a formal presentation of these findings is planned at the Curtin School of Occupational Therapy Research seminars in Semester 1 of 2003.

The Department of Pulmonary Physiology at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital has agreed to the loan of Actigraph sleep monitors for the project and a trial is currently being conducted to establish the suitability of these monitors for use with people with cerebral palsy.

Recruitment of a research assistant is also in progress and it is anticipated this position will be filled by mid-November 2002. Following this appointment, the main data collection will commence. The exact duration of data collection is dependent on availability of CAEP funding for the Symmetrisleep equipment to be used in the study, however it is anticipated that data collection will be complete by early 2004.'