

Guest Editor's note

Although Occupational Therapy in Iran is relatively a new profession, it has been well progressed, providing various services for people with all kinds of disabilities. As such, in the last decades, OT has been recognized as the major demand in all governmental, private and NGO sectors. Due to this demand, occupational therapy training programs have been increased from three into ten, expecting to have more Occupational Therapy graduates in the near future. Furthermore, Iranian occupational therapists established master and PhD programs to further strengthen their services as well as undergraduate trainings. Considering the number of trained occupational therapists in both undergraduate and graduate levels, Iran is located on the top rank in the Middle East countries with more than 2000 therapists. However, we still need to work hard in order to keep our progress powerful, improve our services, respond to social demands and strengthen the professional body in the future. Following issues can surely help to achieve these professional goals.

First, occupational therapy training in Iran was originated from Western theories and models that cultivated in their own specific culture. In this context, occupational therapists sometime have experienced challenges with clients in their clinics. For example, relatives of clients with stroke usually consider improving in gross motor abilities as the main goal for the rehabilitation, and at same time, provide full supports for the clients in all aspects of his/her daily activities. Based on our culture, this behavior is a kind of respect towards the clients. This is in contrary with practice and knowledge of occupational therapists that develop intervention based on Western model within which being independent is the major treatment objective. Therefore, developing an Iranian OT model to address our clients' needs appears to be essential (1). We need also to work on occupational science through developing research centers. Second, when look at the job opportunities, delivering research and published articles, a great percentages of occupational therapists work in pediatric areas and a small number of therapists work in other practice areas such as mental health etc. In order to keep Occupational Therapy profession improved, we need to open new windows toward other problems such as addiction, heart problems, cancers etc. This trend has been already started with preterm infants by interested researcher, but needs to be accelerated in other areas (2, 3). Third, with the long time efforts of Iranian Occupational Therapy Association (IROTA), we are going to be covered by major health insurance companies very soon. Although, this is a major step toward facilitating Occupational Therapy services for all needy people specifically those with low income, it is essential to keep this privilege by moving toward conducting further clinical research and developing more valid assessment tools and outcome measures in order to demonstrate high levels of evidence (regarding our services) to these insurance companies. Forth, like a trend in many countries, Iran population is aging quickly leading to increase rates of disability and chronic health conditions. Occupational therapists need to be trained and understand the facing challenges when working with the older persons. So, we have a responsibility to provide professional and clinical information on all aspects of *occupational therapy* practice related to *older people*. Occupational therapists can help older individuals to live

independently at home (as much as possible) and continue doing their daily activities that maintain their health and well-being. Fifth, traditionally our care system has been based on a medical-centered model. It is the time to shift our care system to a *client-centered practice*. Lastly, technology and World Wide Web provide new websites, gadgets and tools to people all around the world shaping our life enormously. Occupational therapists should constantly follow this trend and try to use them in their services such as virtual trainings, otherwise are not able to keep up with this development and would stay behind.

Despite its development in all aspects, the numbers of occupational therapists are very limited to address current and future development in all mentioned issues, so we need to increase the number of OT students with an appropriate speed according to ever increasing demands. In addition, we should develop networks in national and international levels to be able to use all internal resources and gain international experience. Sharing knowledge and expertise will surely help to promote ourselves and influence the body of the profession globally. To conclude, occupational therapists are required to keep their efforts alive in order to move forward this young profession in Iran.

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