



LEVERAGING THE PANDEMIC TO FOSTER GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: OTAG'S STORY.

The Occupational Therapy Association of Ghana is one of the fastest growing occupational therapy associations in Africa. With barely ten years in existence, the association has a growing membership of approximately 150 practitioners and has organized a number of workshops hosting guest speakers from across the globe.

We recently sat down with the president of OTAG, Ms. Ann Sena Fordie, to learn more about how the association leveraged the Covid-19 pandemic to foster global connections. When asked about the association's initial response to the pandemic, Ms Fordie shared that the pandemic was a big blow to the Ghanaian community in general but occupational therapists in Ghana were quick to mobilize as activity experts to ease the multifaceted burden the pandemic brought to OT practitioners and their clients. The leadership of the association quickly drafted two essential documents; to guide OT practice in the midst of an infectious disease pandemic, and a document outlining activities that the

general populace could engage in while maintaining all COVID protocols.

As human engagement and interaction transitioned to a virtual platform, OTAG saw the opportunity to engage the international community of occupational therapists and organized a number of workshops and conferences that featured scholars and practitioners from all over the world. According to Ms. Fordie, OTAG saw the opportunity to create a learning platform for both OTAG members and the international community to network, engage in dialogue on evidenced-based practices, and share expertise and experiences and network, "It was a win-win situation". Whilst she admitted that the transition to the virtual/online platform of engagement had its positives and negatives, Ms. Fordie highlighted the learning opportunities that members of OTAG benefitted from due to the caliber of guest speakers invited to OTAG seminars and the adoption of teletherapy practice in addition to traditional OT practice delivery, as positive impacts of the pandemic.

When given the opportunity to share a few words with our readership, Ms Fordie said, "I believe that we have a lot of work to do as a continent in propagating OT. I would entreat all of us in our little corners; whether you are a growing African organization, or a developed African organization, to create more awareness about OT. I would also encourage the developed African organizations to give opportunities to



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individuals from countries that do not have OT to study OT in their countries to build the portfolio of OT in Africa. Despite the struggles that we may experience, we should also know that the job we are doing is one that is driven by passion and that should keep us going. The fact that you are able to get your clients from point A to a point where they are functional and able to do things for themselves should be a driving force for you so that despite the challenges and the hurdles you may experience along the way, you would persevere and come out victorious in the long way. I want to say thank you to everyone!"

By Joana Nana Serwaa Akrofi

WORDS FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dr. Matumo Ramafikeng
OTARG President

Greetings to you all. It is with great pleasure that I write this first Word from the President for the year 2022. After the publishing of the OTARG turning 25 at the end of 2021, we are excited to bring you this first newsletter of the year. Halfway into the year and a lot has happened, we have had some proud moments and some stressful ones. One challenge that we encountered was the suspension of the OTARG website by the host company, a matter that we were unable to resolve, that led to the delay in publishing this issue. We are now back again with a change of domain name <https://otarg.org/>

The exciting news are that, firstly, Namibia has graciously agreed to host the OTARG Congress in 2023. This year aligns with the normal cycle of congresses and hopefully we will be able to have a face-to-face Congress. It is always more exciting to see each other in person. Thank you NAOT for remaining committed to this event that brings

members and supporters of OTARG together on African soil. Secondly, the Elizabeth Casson Trust extended its offering to support OTs in more African countries than those in the East Africa corridor to upgrade from a Diploma in OT to the Bachelor's level. Again, as OTARG Exco we worked in an advisory capacity with the Trust to make this a possibility. Good luck to all those that submitted applications for this funding. Lastly, it is a year of celebration as our mother body; the WFOT turns 70 this year. Congratulations to the WFOT, continue to represent the profession on the international stage and guide the growth of occupational therapy. As OTARG we have felt the support of the WFOT in all our ventures, including the inception of OTARG and for that, thank you. A special thank you to our Africa liaison; the WFOT President Samantha Shann who is featured in this edition, you have made your mark on the continent, and we truly appreciate the work you have done and time you have spent on the growth of occupational therapy in Africa. Let us continue doing the good work for this beloved profession.

The continent is coming alive again, with many countries phasing out restrictions that were enforced during the height of the pandemic. The recovery process has started, and we are all resuming pre-COVID activities in one form or another. The pandemic pushed us to use resources available to us in ways that we had not before. Innovations were born out of the crisis, and these have the potential to remain part of OT practice, research and education. One

area of occupational therapy that is and will be mostly challenged by this is the training of future OTs, as we are torn between preserving old ways of doing and teaching and equipping future therapists with skills to work in the post-COVID era. In essence, these shifts open opportunities for research and practising differently, which is exciting.

Unfortunately, countries on the continent suffered other disruptions in addition to the pandemic, such as political unrest, floods, drastic increase in cost of living, unemployment, poor working conditions, and xenophobic attacks among others. These affect us as the OT community, both in our professional practice and our personal lives as part of the society. We have to grapple with these while we do our best to provide quality services and some are more deeply and directly affected than others, therefore we have to support each other in developing skills and resilience to live every day as it comes using occupation to survive.

Let us continue supporting each other and doing our best for those that we serve. I hope you will feel inspired after reading this newsletter and we would appreciate your feedback.

To all who support the work of the OTARG Exco, Thank you!

We are looking forward to seeing you at the WFOT Congress in Paris in August. See you there!

INTERVIEW WITH SAMANTHA SHANN - WFOT PRESIDENT

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. You have a long record of working with the WFOT and we'd like you to tell us about yourself and your motivation for serving at such a global level all these years

Yeah, it is a really interesting question. I don't think I've ever really thought about how long I've been involved with the WFOT until last year when I stood for the election of president, and I think it's just something that that's happened very naturally in my life. I was very privileged back in the late 1990s and early 2000s to live and work in Uganda at a time when we were establishing the occupational therapy profession in Uganda. I did a lot of work in clinical practice myself. My clinical practice is mental health predominantly, but also assisting new graduates to establish services within and across Uganda. I then spent two years as the principal tutor at the Occupational Therapy Education Program in Kampala. So, I guess that's where my real passion for development sort of happened. But again, at the time, I didn't realize that what was what was happening, it was it was day-to-day work. But certainly, that experience of negotiating with higher education institutions, with other professions, and at government level, that's really where my experience started in those sorts of positions. That's where my first contact was with the World Federation, because during that time, Uganda became a full member of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists, and I got a lot of support personally and professionally from WFOT and I've always been very grateful for that support. In those initial years of

establishing the profession in Uganda, it was also the time when OTARG was formed and we had the first OTARG conferences, and I was very involved in those initial years of the development of OTARG. So again, that negotiation of establishing organizations.

When I left Uganda for very personal reasons and returned to the UK, it was very timely that the UK Delegate Position for the WFOT was available, and I got elected to that position. I also maintained very close contact with colleagues in Uganda, and that was way back before zoom, way before these days when we've got used to long distance things. So, some of it was still very much by mail, a little bit of email, but internet cafes were not great back in those times. But yes, I maintained that, and I guess at that point saw that it was still possible to provide that support and input and at a long distance. Through my work, in the WFOT being the UK delegate, I worked very strongly within the UK trying to ensure that the UK started to look a bit further at international representation and relationships and had a long history of connections between the UK, the States, Canada, Australia, trying to bring forward that there was occupational therapy in lots of other places around the world, as well and developing those sorts of links. I then got elected within WFOT for international cooperation and that put me in contact with lots of new groups of people and newly formed associations that were developed in occupational therapy, and that allowed me to really use and build on my skills that I'd been developing in Uganda. At the same time, I was doing my master's around business development



Samantha Shann
WFOT President

and development of services. And in the UK, looking at what we call role emerging. And so, I was looking at where occupational therapy could be positioned differently within the UK. I think that's always been my real driving force, like where can occupational therapy best position itself? And that is very different country to country, region to region.

But it's always been my question of forefront; where is occupational therapy best positioned? And I think that's what's always driven my work within WFOT. It's about empowering people to think through those problems themselves. And I believe very strongly that leadership is a partnership. And I've always tried to work in partnership with whoever I'm working with. They are the real experts in that context and the real experts in what's needed. But it's often about being able to ask the right questions. And I think that's also what drives me personally and professionally, asking the right questions and helping to find the right questions, not always knowing the answers, but being willing

INTERVIEW WITH SAMANTHA SHANN - CONTINUED

to engage in that dialogue. And through doing that, I've had the huge privilege of working with many countries across the world to establish occupational therapy. So that was probably a very long answer. I hope it gives you something to go on.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. It was a great answer. Can you share your vision for WFOT and some of the plans that you have for occupational therapy as the WFOT president?

I guess my vision is that the occupational therapy workforce is positioned to improve the health and well-being of the global population. And that means that for occupational therapy to have very robust, good quality education programs for occupational therapists, and that we promote and maintain ethical professional practice that is context driven and context specific.

The one thing that I've valued throughout my career is mentorship, and I believe very strongly in mentoring. I believe strongly in WFOT being there to help connect. And I think it's really important that we understand what WFOT is. We often get lots of requests for WFOT to do something, but ultimately, we're a federation of national and regional occupational therapy associations, so we're there to support occupational therapy within those national and regional settings. At the same time, developing our relationship with the World Health Organization because it's that collaborative official relationship with the World Health Organization that enables us to get occupational therapy mentioned in very high-level

health agendas that affect the health and well-being of people globally. So, if WFOT can influence at W.H.O. level, that then hopefully trickles down into regional and national health agendas where occupational therapy is more recognized. So, my vision is that we work with the national associations to help develop and promote occupational therapy. And we also then work with the World Health Organization to get that real international perspective.

I think we also need to recognize that within the profession, there are some very important issues that need addressing. We need to be very aware of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion as a profession. Professionals have developed very differently in different parts of the world and certainly something of my vision over the next few years, starting with the 70th anniversary of WFOT this year, but leading on, will be how we capture the history of the profession outside of the western countries. We need to ensure that we know how and why the profession is developing in parts of the world so there is real diversity and inclusion. We need to challenge ourselves, challenge ourselves to look at decolonization, challenge ourselves to work against the authorities that have maybe kept us in compartments for very long times, but making sure that everybody feels included in WFOT.

How would you say the WFOT supports its members in Africa and what structures are in place for inclusion and representation on a global level?

So, within WFOT, the executive members have regional representation and for many years, in my former position as VP Finance, Africa was my one of my regions and it remains one of my regions as president, Africa is very close to my heart. I think one of the things that has always been very strong and continues to remain strong is the link between WFOT and OTARG. I think there's lots of different representation within WFOT. WFOT works closely with OTARG, but also closely with its individual member organizations within Africa. So, there's that direct link from member organizations into WFOT and or via OTARG, but I think the more coming together makes a strong link.

With our member organizations, we support issues such as developing education programs, helping to support professional standards, workforce planning, may sometimes help look at registration in countries, making sure that occupational therapy is recognized as an autonomous profession. We believe in very much responding to member organizations' needs. From a

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- Samantha Shann

INTERVIEW WITH SAMANTHA SHANN - CONTINUED

WFOT point of view, we never make assumptions. If a member organization needs assistance, they need to come to WFOT, we're always happy to help and assist. Presently across the African continent, we are working with a number of countries in the very early development stages of occupational therapy. So, looking at the development of education programs and national associations. And again, we do that in liaison with OTARG as well. We've been liaising with OTARG with regards diploma-qualified occupational therapists and how they can upgrade to a degree level. I've also been working with the Elizabeth Casson Trust to help to look at some funding. We realize we're still touching the tip of the iceberg, but it's about developing close links and that awareness. I would say for the African member organizations to remain in contact with WFOT. Let us know what your issues are, and that doesn't have to be when WFOT asks for information through our surveys or through voting on various things, it can be at any point. We're always willing to have meetings or answer things via email.

I strongly urge occupational therapists across Africa to get involved in their national occupational therapy associations. If we are going to make the profession stronger, more known, and respected, we all have to work together. The national association is so important because it is the voice of the profession in country, and it should be the go-to place for occupational therapists to meet, problem-solve, get that professional support and development. Also, the national association should be

the go-to place for the government to come to for expertise on occupational therapy. It should be the place where other non-government organizations come wanting to know and work with occupational therapists. Equally, with WFOT's work with the World Health Organization, we often get requests for experts to go into World Health Organization working groups. We go to our member organizations and look for the experts via our member organizations. So, if you are an individual occupational therapist working in an area, say, in central Ghana, but you're not a member of your national association and your national association doesn't know what you're doing, your name is never going to get put forward to be on a W.H.O. working group. So, your national association needs to know what you're doing, you need to be active in your national association. There are lots of other opportunities to work across Africa and even internationally in other regions. So, I think that's the real sort of structure there.

Do you have any words of advice/encouragement for OTs in Africa?

I think it is important to recognize that WFOT is a volunteer organization. What has kept me motivated for so long is working with so many inspiring people and being able to change people's lives and help them to do that. But ultimately, it's my strong belief in occupational therapy and my belief that occupational therapy can and does change people's lives.

So, for the words of advice for occupational therapists, I think we have to stay together. We have to network,

we need to support each other. We are a growing profession, but we're still a small profession and we're much better together than divided. That doesn't mean we've always got to agree, but we've got to be respectful of that and respect that diversity. Make sure that we were included. My words of encouragement are to love what you're doing, to network, and to share your examples of good practice. Everyone is doing some really, really good work day-on-day and to share that amongst yourselves and with the rest of the world.

Thank you so, so much for everything. Would you want to use this opportunity to make any announcements or say anything to our readership?

I would encourage as many of those that can come to the WFOT Congress in Paris in August. It would be wonderful to see many African OTs in Paris, if not in person, then virtually. I would say if you do get there, do come and say hello, any of you. We will also be making some bigger announcements at the Congress.

“ If we are going to make the profession stronger, more known, and respected, we all have to work together.

- Samantha Shann

Interview by Joana Nana Serwaa Akrofi

CLOTHING FACTORIES AS A ROLE-EMERGING PLACEMENT FOR FINAL YEAR OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY STUDENTS: A STUDENT PERSPECTIVE.

Author: Tenille Cannon, OT IV Student, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

Students from the University of Stellenbosch complete a “Community Interaction” clinical block during their final year of studies. The Community Interaction block is expected to offer opportunities to develop oneself and to equip one with the knowledge and skills necessary to work in the community. It is based on service learning as a method within the experiential learning domain that links academic learning to community services so that certain identified community needs may be addressed through participation in an organised service activity. It requires a delicate balance between what needs to be learned and the service that is being delivered. (STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IV COMMUNITY INTERACTION MANUAL, 2022) For my community interaction block, I was placed at a clothing factory.

THE CLOTHING FACTORY

When beginning this clinical placement, I had mixed emotions based off the experiences of previous students. After 6 weeks, I can truly say that I found the beauty that lies within the balance mentioned above. It is not sunshine and pure goodness all day, every day, so I will paint the picture. You walk into a factory where most people are overworked, drained, and generally do not look happy and you already know that you will not be able to help everyone due to the short time that you are there, and the number of workers present. Everyone was so focused on production targets and their workstations that it became challenging to see individuals. Planning was so important but the most difficult thing to do because you could have a Plan A, B and C and still not achieve your goals if the production targets are not being met or if any member of management did not agree for the individual to leave their workstation.

But my mindset changed when I realized that this is exactly why it is a community interaction placement, and I knew what I wanted to achieve.

OT SERVICES AND MY PROJECT

The previous student had started looking at mental health within the factory. She interviewed several workers and found that a degree of anxiety and depression were present. I found this intriguing, especially due to the fact that most occupational therapy provided in this kind of session was physical and related to work rehabilitation. My aims were therefore to determine the degree to which anxiety and depression were present, whether the causes were home- or work-related and whether referrals to other healthcare professionals was necessary.

When I began my assessments, I aimed to assess at least 50% of the department where I was placed. There were 62 workers on the floor. Four were not included in the sample due to their positions (line manager, clerk, and two team leaders). Of the remaining 58 workers on the production line, 29 workers were assessed. Many were reluctant to attend sessions which I found to be due to production targets, or not knowing what OT was. An educational talk was then hosted to educate workers on OT and there was a gradual increase in willingness to attend a session, which showcased just how important knowledge regarding OT services is. Of the workers who were assessed 34.5% had a score indicating a level of anxiety, and 55.2% had a score indicating a level of depression. These individuals were further assessed to determine whether stress was home- or work-related and majority indicated home-related factors. The question that lived in my head was “What can I do to better the

work environment that positively influences mental health overall?" I think the answer to this question will be ever-changing and ever-evolving, but having OT students within these settings will make a huge contribution to the answer.

WORKING WITHOUT A CLINICIAN ON-SITE

This is a factor that makes a huge contribution to whether students enjoy the placement or not. When providing direct services, i.e., individual rehabilitation, it is challenging to not have a clinician onsite as you are expected to provide treatment to individuals, and it is very focused on physical aspects. This could be why many third-year students do not look forward to the placement; I personally do not think that I would have enjoyed it either. It is also a challenge to not have a clinician onsite in fourth year, but due to the community interaction structure and the different focus, I have seen it as a blessing in disguise. I was forced to plan and manage a project and learnt a lot about these and making decisions. Decisions need to be made quickly as the inability to see individuals at times that would suit you is already an obstacle that needs to be overcome. I truly believe that my clinical reasoning and project management skills have improved tremendously as I quickly learnt how to evaluate all possible solutions to a problem, come to a decision knowing exactly why I have chosen that route, then being able to explain the process to the clinician or supervisor. It helps build your confidence in both yourself and your professional conduct, and for this I would not change a thing. Another positive to not having a clinician onsite is that I felt more empowered to ask questions, and this allowed opportunities to meet professionals such as the health and safety officer, occupational health nurse, managers, and supervisors. I learnt how to advocate for my role as the OT student and learnt the different processes for referring and scheduling appointments for workers to receive the services they require. One negative that I became frustrated by was that the workers did not all have access to the same resources and facilities and there was no urgency for this to be resolved. This could be due to the fact that there is no constant pressure on those responsible, and this should be changed.

CONCLUSION:

There are so many learning opportunities for OT students within clothing factories. It may be through providing direct services such as physical rehabilitation or indirect services such as health promotion and projects that reach a broader community, which may also address both physical and mental health. Clothing factory workers may not even realize just how valuable OT is, just as students do not realise the value of such a placement, and therefore having students enter these factories has an overall benefit for all involved.

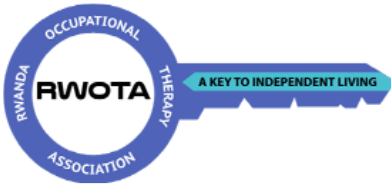
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RWANDA OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSOCIATION ONLINE MENTORSHIP PROGRAM IN PROGRESS AS: SOLUTION TO A PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS



Rwanda Occupational Therapy Association (RWOTA) is 8 years' professional entity of Occupational Therapists in Rwanda. It is registered under No 361/RGB/NGO/OC/12/2017. In 2021 RWOTA members were 36, currently, we count 38 two new members have joined in this year 2022. RWOTA is guided by the following 3 major themes;

- 1.To promote the occupational therapy profession in Rwanda.
- 2.To ensure evidence-based occupational therapy practice.
3. To sustain quality of occupational therapy services.

In 2019, RWOTA in partnership with Humanity & inclusion (HI) conducted a mentorship needs assessment among 27 OT graduates to identify the needs of young graduates and proposed a well-designed and contextualized mentorship program through the professional association. It is in this regard RWOTA organized this mentorship program. The training is designed to be provided by different Occupational Therapists from crosscutting areas of practices like universities, hospitals, rehabilitation centers, research and also from different countries and cultures. It

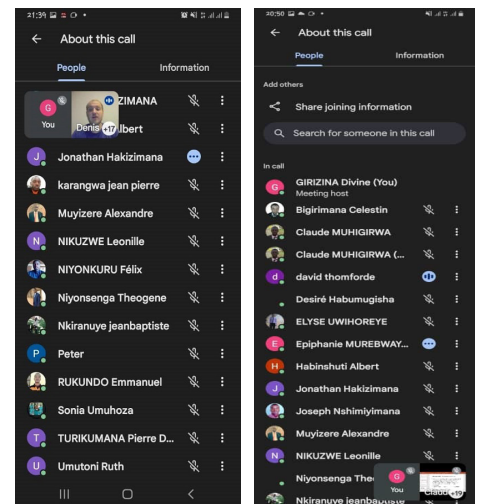
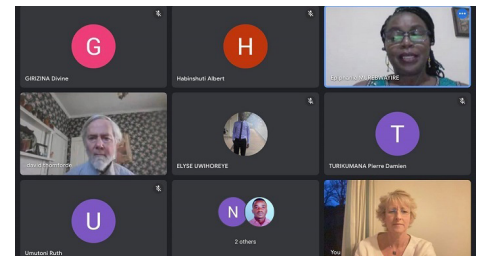
comes to strengthen Occupational therapists in Rwanda to advance their knowledge and skills in different areas of occupational therapy practice.

The program will have three trimesters, the first trimester started from February 5th /2022 to May 14th, the second trimester from June 4th to July 16th and the third trimester from August 6th to November 2022. Therefore, we have already covered geriatric course by David Thomforde a senior Occupational therapist from USA, we also covered Orthopedic (amputation management), OT Interventions in ICU by Mr Denis Tuttle Occupational therapist from USA. Hand Therapy (The role of indigenously developed splints and low tech adaptive devices in enhancing the rehabilitative possibilities) by Dr & Associate professor Shovan Saha from India. Moreover, we will also cover different courses which Neurology and Pediatrics. The participants are more active during training and attend at 100%. According to their testimonies, the participants showed much interest in continuing this mentorship as long as it is helping them to be competent respectively in their working settings.

In addition, they are getting the Continuous professional development credits which are required to renew the Practicing License and they are supposed to get it after paying, however, they are all getting them only using their internet. All OTs admired this program as it is facilitating them to obtain continuous training courses related to OT profession. Thus the learning

process is ongoing and sharpening the practical skills with updated knowledge, and improving the capability of using evidence based treatment approaches. RWOTA chairperson acknowledge all mentors specifically and the participation of members in this professional activity in general.

Epiphanie Murebwayire
RWOTA chairperson
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Screenshots of Online Mentorship Programme - Geriatric topic by Mr. David Thomforde and Amputation for lower limb by Mr Denis Tuttle.

ZAOT COLLABORATES WITH MOTIVATEOTS

Dear colleagues,

ZAOT in collaboration with mOTivateOTs (an initiative by Zimbabwean OTs abroad to develop and promote OT in Zimbabwe through mentorship and resourcing) commemorated World OT Day last year. The event also marked the inaugural ZAOT-mOTivateOTs Awards, that saw students who have excelled in various capacities or who were striving to attain excellence get awards (mainly sponsored by University of Zimbabwe Alumni through mOTivateOTs).

ZAOT also took the opportunity to invite a pioneer of the OT train programme in Zimbabwe, Mrs Alice Mawerera-Moyo as our key speaker. Please find attached a link to her profound speech for your information and wider circulation <https://youtu.be/Ult6ee8mYAw>

Kind regards,
Edwin Mavindidze
ZAOT President



UPDATE ON OTARG CONGRESS 2022

Dear Delegate,

Our sincere apologies for the delay in communication. It our pleasure to announce that the Namibian Association of Occupational Therapists (NAOT) has agreed to host the OTARG Congress in 2023 in a face-to-face format. This decision was not taken lightly, it was through deliberations and taking into account that attendance to this congress would be considerably affected if hosted in the same year and month as the WFOT. As was indicated in previous communication, we were compelled to rethink our plans for the OTARG Congress following the announcement of the postponement of the WFOT Congress to August 2022. The OTARG Exco in conjunction with the Namibia Local Organizing Committee [LOC] again wish to acknowledge your support towards hosting the congress. It is our intention to use the abstract (s) that you submitted. If however, you wish to withdraw this abstract, please do let us know. We hope to see you in Namibia in 2023. Further details about the conference will follow soon.

Stay safe and adhere to COVID protocols.
OTARG EXCO and Namibia LOC

LETTER FOR OTARG REVIEWERS



30 May 2022

Dear OTARG colleagues,

The South African Journal of Occupational Therapy (SAJOT) would like to invite suitable candidates to serve as reviewers for the journal.

SAJOT is the official Journal of the Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa and is a leading publication for research into occupational therapy in Africa. The journal publishes and disseminates research articles that contribute to the scientific knowledge of the profession and its outcomes with particular reference to service delivery in Africa. It provides a platform for debate around issues relevant to occupational therapy in Africa, which contributes to the development of the profession worldwide. The journal provides open access to its content immediately at the time of publication of an edition on the principle that making research freely available to the public supports a greater global exchange of knowledge. (www.sajot.co.za).

The SAJOT currently uses a double-blind peer review process. For SAJOT to deliver on its mandate to providing content that is timeously reviewed, we require peer-reviewers who play an essential role in ensuring the integrity of this process. Largely, we are dependent on the willing participation of such individuals, who may use the opportunity to also develop their own scholarly skills.

If you are interested in contributing as a peer reviewer to the SAJOT, we invite you to submit your Short CV, indicating the following:

- A summary of your research track record and overall research experience
- Publication Record
- Peer-review experience
- Research interest/s

Please email these to sajot@otasa.org.za ASAP.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Buchanan", is written over a horizontal line.

Chairperson: Publications committee
Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa (OTASA)

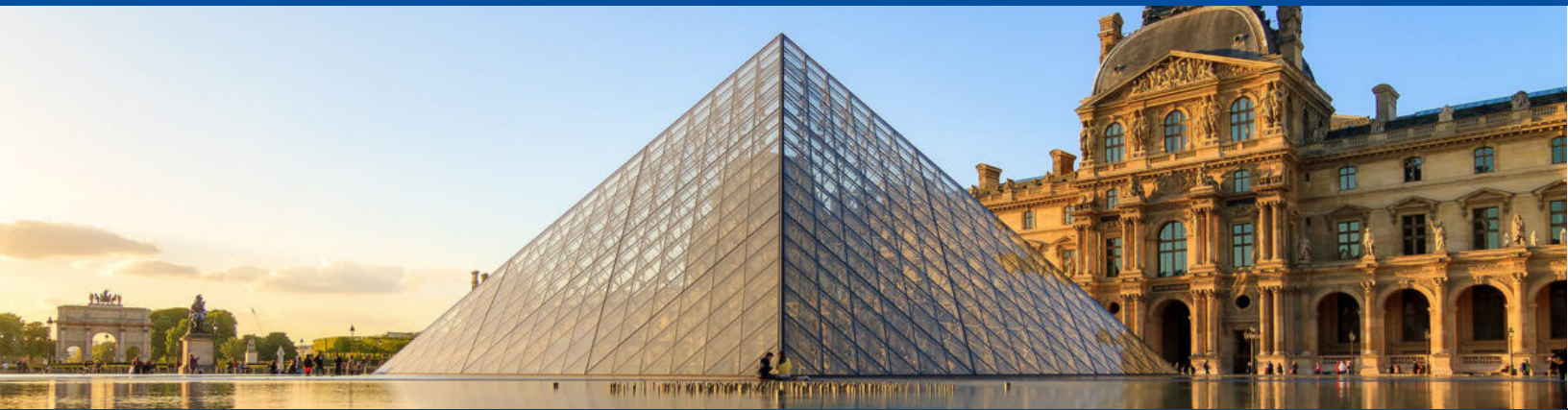
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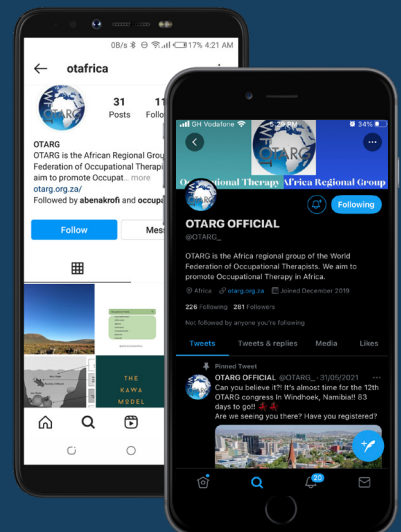
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Get instant updates on all OTARG activities and updates, interact with OT's across Africa & the world beyond. OTARG seeks to build a massive hub to foster cooperation, knowledge sharing & the promotion of all things OT. Get on now! You'll fit right in.



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