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Monday, February 25, 2013

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## **New Name and New Approach to Support Continued Competence**

Approved by the Board last Fall, the name change was necessary for consistency with the Health Professions Act which requires the College to have a Quality Assurance Program to promote high practice standards.

"It prevents ongoing explanation to the public and government that we have a program but it's called something else," explains Registrar Kathy Corbett. "Our challenge now is to make sure our registrants are aware of the name change and what is required."

The overall purpose of the program remains the same which is to support, monitor, and enforce the continued safe, ethical, and effective practice of occupational therapists in British Columbia. It will continue to have three elements:

- (1) Competence Maintenance
- (2) Competence Assessment (Continuing Competence Exam) and
- (3) Competence Improvement.

The name change comes at a time when the Continuing Competence Committee chaired by Donna Drynan is ready to launch the new Annual Competence Review (ACR). The ACR replaces the original Competence Maintenance activities, i.e., the bi-annual self-assessment and professional development plan which were discontinued in 2012.

The plan was approved by the COTBC Board last November and will be ready for registrants this coming April. Occupational therapists must complete the Annual Competence Review to be eligible to renew their registration in 2013. After two years of development the committee is very pleased and excited about its launch.

The purpose of the Annual Competence Review (ACR) is to support registrants' continued competence. It's designed to help registrants identify gaps in knowledge and risks to client safety and, in turn, link with regulatory standards and resources to assist them in delivering safe, ethical and quality occupational therapy services.

More specifically the tool will guide registrants to:

- review their practice hours, supports to practice and career changes,

## **Your Current Email Address Needed by March 31**

The Annual Competence Maintenance Review (ACR) replaces the former bi-annual self-assessment and professional development plan. The only preparation required of registrants is to check that their email address, on record at the College, is current and the one that they wish to use for College email communication. This can be done online by visiting the [College website](#).

In April occupational therapists will receive, by email, instructions on how to access the new Annual Competence Review (ACR). This email will contain a link to the ACR website as well as a username and password. If your email address is not up-to-date with the College, you will not receive the email. Completing the ACR is a requirement for renewing your registration.

**Please update your email**

- complete a knowledge quiz using a case/question format similar to that which will be used in the Continuing Competence Exam, and
- practice using a decision-making tool which will allow them to apply the regulatory issues covered in the knowledge quiz to a situation specific in their practice, regardless of their role or practice setting.

After completing the required activities, occupational therapists will receive an individualized, feedback report with the results of the knowledge quiz and links to resources for information on regulatory standards and resources to support their competence.

Completing one online learning module will also be required but not until 2014 although the first module should be available in the Fall of 2013. Eventually a bank of learning modules will be available each covering a regulatory topic. Based on the results of their knowledge quiz a specific learning module may be recommended.

Individual results from the Annual Competence Review are not available to the College. The College will only know which registrants completed the ACR and can therefore renew their registration. The confidentiality of these results is ensured by directing registrants to a secure, password-protected website that is not accessible to the College. COTBC can request anonymized aggregate data to inform development of additional College resources and continuing professional opportunities for occupational therapists but they do not have access to individual records.

To prepare for the Annual Competence Review, occupational therapists should ensure that their current email address is the one on record at the College.

#### How Was the Annual Competence Review Developed?

From 2011-2012 a review of the existing element was done by the Continuing Competence Committee under the guidance of Dr. Susan Glover-Takahashi of SGT & Associates. The process included: (1) a review of the literature and other regulatory college practices, (2) revisiting data gathered from the pilot testing of the original element, (3) assessing the degree to which the element met the guiding principles of the program's framework in comparison to other tools, and (4) a registrant survey.

The survey request was completed by 651 registrants which was 31.4% response rate. The committee was very grateful to the occupational therapists who spent considerable time providing feedback on the existing program and input into existing and possible supports to maintaining competence. The analysis of these results allowed the committee to proceed with further development based on BC occupational therapists preferences and perceptions regarding effective supports to competence.

Also included in the Annual Competence Review is an evaluation. The Continuing Competence Committee encourages registrants to complete the evaluation so they can continue to build a program that balances the needs of occupational therapists with the public's right to safe, ethical and quality care.

Members of the Continuing Competence Committee include:  
Donna Drynan (Chair)

### **address no later than March 31, 2013 to prevent problems accessing the online Annual Competence Review.**

Those registrants who are concerned about completing the activities online are asked to contact the College right away. Although the delivery platform will be very basic we recognize that some occupational therapists may need help in completing the activities. College staff will assist registrants to overcome any barriers to online participation in the Quality Assurance Program (QAP).

### **Three Perspectives on Helping IEOTs**

The paper, *Exploring the integration of internationally educated occupational therapists into the workforce*, will be released this month in the February issue of the *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*. The results suggest that although hiring IEOTs can bring benefits to the workplace, changes made along the continuum would facilitate integration and benefit all stakeholders. "Stumbling blocks" and "ingredients for success" are also described.

Paper authors include:  
Susan Mulholland, Tracy Dietrich, Sandra Bressler and Kathy Corbett.

Jennifer Glasgow (Vice-Chair)

Naz Chow  
Teresa Green  
Hilary MacInnis

## When is Temporary Registration Necessary?

To practice and use title as an occupational therapist in British Columbia, one must be registered with COTBC. "Practice" includes the diversity of activities occupational therapists are involved in, including direct client care, teaching, learning, consultation, research, administration and/or sales. Registration with COTBC ensures accountability to the public, because occupational therapists agree to practice within the regulations and standards in BC.

The College has three categories of registration that allow an occupational therapist to practice in BC: Full, Provisional, and Temporary.

Temporary Registration is a courtesy registration granted to occupational therapists who are registrants in good standing in another province (or occupational therapy jurisdiction recognized by the COTBC) and want to come to B.C. to practice for a short period of time. Temporary registration is granted by the Registration Committee for a particular purpose and is valid for no more than 120 consecutive days and no more than for 4 months in any 12-month period. The Temporary Registration category supports mobility between the Provinces or jurisdictions that are recognized to already have programs in place for registration and quality assurance.

The number of occupational therapists who hold Temporary Registration in B.C. is very small — approximately 12 per year. Two of the most common situations requiring Temporary Registration include occupational therapists coming to BC to attend or teach a clinical course, or to assess or treat a client on a very limited basis. For example an occupational therapist working in Alberta and attending a two-day paediatrics course in Vancouver that requires some hands on practice, or an occupational therapist working in Toronto and visiting northern B.C. to complete a one-time assessment of a client.

Depending on the proposed occupational therapy to be practised, the Temporary Registrant may be required to arrange supervision by a COTBC registrant. That registrant must agree to be responsible for ensuring the appropriate provision of care for the clients. As a final note, individuals with Temporary Registration cannot participate on the College Board or Committees nor vote in an election of board members, or at a general meeting of registrants.

The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) Annual Conference will be held in Victoria from May 29-June 1, 2013. Only those visiting occupational therapists participating in a session that involves direct hands-on or interaction with a patient or client will need to apply for Temporary Registration. To apply for Temporary Registration an individual must complete the application form as well as provide the necessary paperwork and fees. Of particular note, proof of liability insurance coverage in BC for the period of the proposed temporary registration is required.

The reverse scenario also needs to be considered. For example, what happens when an occupational

This project was sponsored by the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia, which received funding from the Government of Canada, under the Foreign Credential Recognition Program, in partnership with the British Columbia Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, and Innovation.

## College Information Sessions

The registrar and other college staff are available to come and speak to small and large groups regarding practice issues such as informed consent, client records, the use of support personnel, or the Quality Assurance Program. Please email [info@cotbc.org](mailto:info@cotbc.org) for more information. We look forward to hearing from you.

therapist registered in B.C. wants to offer or attend a course or provide limited client services in another province. It is up to the B.C. therapist to check the registration and practice requirements in the other province or jurisdiction. Most Canadian jurisdictions have a registration category similar or the same as COTBC's Temporary Registration.

If you would like further information regarding Temporary Registration please refer to Section 46, p. 23 in the [COTBC Bylaws](#) or contact COTBC at [registration@cotbc.org](mailto:registration@cotbc.org).

This article was written by Susan Mulholland former Deputy Registrar of COTBC

## Who is Who on the COTBC Board

Carol Williams a long-standing public board member completed her term at the end of January and will be greatly missed. She was the first public board member to chair the College Board and did so with grace and respect for the office and the responsibility. She will continue on the Inquiry Committee.

Another loss from the Board is Andrea Bowden who worked diligently to develop the new strategic plan as well as assisting with the search and hiring of our new Deputy Registrar Cindy McLean. Andrea is also continuing her work with the College by remaining on the Registration Committee.

Replacing Andrea is Lindsey McMitchell and re-elected Board members include Darlene Russell and Angenita Gerbracht. Diane Graham and Darlene Russell were re-elected by the Board as Chair and Vice-chair respectively.

Short bios on all the Board member can be found on the [College website](#).

## Strategy 2015 Focuses on Quality and Safety

In April, 2012 representatives from each College committee met with the COTBC Board and staff in a facilitated session, *Looking Back to Plan for the Future*, to begin developing the new Strategic Plan. The Board met again in June and through another facilitated session reviewed the information gathered at the April meeting. Key drivers, assumptions, values, trends, critical success factors and ways in which to build on current success to inform priorities were discussed. Following this, the plan was further refined by the Board and approved in January.

Registrar Kathy Corbett is very pleased with Strategy 2015. "It allows for easier reporting on the ways in which we are operationalizing the plan, and advances the colleges efforts for quality regulation."

For a quick glance at the Strategy 2015, [click here](#).

## Social Media in OT Practice

*The author Lily Wainer was a MSc OT student at the University of Toronto doing her final fieldwork placement at the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario. This article originally appeared in On the record, a publication of the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO). It was adapted with permission.*

During my final fieldwork placement at the College, I took on a project to look into how social media can affect occupational therapy practice. As the project progressed, it became apparent that occupational

therapists would benefit from information and guidance about how to use social media safely and ethically. The issues and risks with the use of social media generally involve professionalism, privacy, confidentiality, professional boundaries, and advertising.

### **Professionalism**

As regulated health care professionals, occupational therapists are aware that confidentiality of client information should be maintained in accordance with the legal requirements of the Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA). It's easy enough to think that if you remove client identifiers that it is okay to discuss anecdotes on your social media site, but this is not so.

For instance, consider posting an interesting client situation on a social media site you use online. You've removed all identifiers, but forgotten that you mentioned the name of the hospital where you work in a post a few weeks ago. An uncle of this client looks up the name of the hospital online and your post comes up with all the information about his nephew, which he recognizes from your description of the situation.

Be mindful of this potential for inadvertent confidentiality breaches. A motto that you should consider when deciding what to post on your social media site is "when in doubt, leave it out." Privacy refers to when, how and to what extent an individual chooses to share their personal information. If you have an open social media group online and anyone can add themselves to the group, you may think it is okay for clients to add themselves to your group since you are not friends with them. However, in some social media groups, members' names may be visible for all to see, and this may be a violation of client privacy. It is important to watch out for these kinds of unintentional violations of privacy.

### **Professional Boundaries**

Social media can also create interesting situations related to professional boundaries. For example, a doctor in the UK was sent her favourite flowers by a client after he found this information on her Facebook page. It is important for occupational therapists to become familiar with privacy policies and settings on social media sites to control who has access to personal profiles and information. In 2009, Facebook updated its privacy policy and settings, which automatically defaulted all privacy settings to go back to public settings. These settings had to be manually readjusted back to private settings. It is important to be alert for changes like these on social media sites. Keeping tabs on what comes up when you Google your own name is another way to check that what you meant to be private has stayed that way.

Occupational therapists are familiar with the Standards for Professional Boundaries (COTO, 2009) established by the College. These Standards apply to all forms of communication, including social media. Just as an occupational therapist would avoid developing personal relationships with clients in a clinical environment, she or he should avoid "friending" clients on social media sites designed for personal use. Having a client as a friend online may be considered a dual relationship because it is more difficult to differentiate professional from personal interactions through this mode of communication.

### **Advertising**

An occupational therapist may wish to have a social media page to advertise their services. However, there are some considerations when it comes to having a social media page where the public can post freely. When we cannot control what is posted on the social media page and by whom, there is risk involved. For instance, what if a client posts on your page a testimonial about your services? This contravenes the advertising regulation where an advertisement of OT services cannot contain any testimonials, comparative or superlative statements. Testimonials may inappropriately influence decision making and are irrelevant to the needs of individual clients. In this situation, the occupational therapist may be held accountable for contravening the advertising regulation. Even if clients post comments that are not testimonials, by stating that they are clients their privacy may be compromised. Personal information about clients, even their names, is to be kept private.

Hopefully these suggestions help guide occupational therapists to continue to participate in social media while minimizing risk to the public. These suggestions are not too restrictive as to inhibit the growth of occupational therapy practice with evolving technology, and the potential benefits for clients.

If you would like further information on the use of social media in OT practice, visit the [COTBC website](#) to

listen to the 2012 AGM Workshop keynote presentation, *Where r u @: Social Media & OT Practice* by Barb Wilson from the College of Registered Nurses of BC, and a facilitated session by occupational therapist Lauren Fox exploring one use of social media. Included with the podcast and slides is a list of references and a link to a Youtube video with helpful suggestions.

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[www.cotbc.org](http://www.cotbc.org)

219-645 Fort Street, Victoria, British Columbia Canada V8W 1G2

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