



Friday, May 17, 2013

Message from the Board Chair

Papers will be presented at the upcoming CAOT Conference in Victoria related to the development of the Quality Assurance Program (QAP) including the Continuing Competence Exam. It is my belief that the QAP is well aligned with the conference theme — *The Future is Here: Leading Solutions*. I hope to see many of you at the conference later this month.

Kathy Corbett and I recently had the opportunity to attend the annual symposium of the Canadian Society of Association Executives for Chief Elected and Chief Executive Officers in Montreal. The focus of this annual leadership and governance symposium was on partnerships — the partnership of the registrar and board chair, and the partnership of the organization's leaders with their board. I'd like to share with you some of the same highlights that we discussed with the board.

Now in its 12th year, COTBC has definitely reached a stage of adulthood; mastering its environment, serving the needs of members, and adding new areas of service and functions.

I am reassured in knowing that we have achieved the four cornerstones of a successful organization. (1) Our board and staff, comprised of great people with the right skills, enjoy what they do and like the people they work with. (2) Our decision-making and work methods fit our organizational culture and are viewed as a model for others. (3) Our registrants, staff, public recipients of our service and stakeholders respect and trust each other. (4) Our "brand" is our earned reputation for remaining relevant in a changing world.

The importance of leadership continuity and communication on the future of organizations resonated with us. As a result a number of quality improvement activities were considered. Our board and our registrar are strong in commitment, knowledge and advocacy concerning regulatory issues. But are we providing the right mix of community building to engage our registrants and the public? COTBC is currently planning to hold the 2014 Annual General Meeting (AGM) outside the Lower Mainland to connect with and engage occupational therapists from other parts of the province. A public awareness initiative coordinated and funded jointly by the Health Regulatory Organizations of BC is currently underway designed to increase the public's knowledge of the self-regulating health professions in BC and the roles and functions of their respective colleges.

Annual Competence Review Closes May 31

As a result of the Annual Competence Review (ACR) occupational therapists are debating the answers to the regulatory questions, applying the principles to their own practice and accessing College resources. The Continuing Competence Committee is very pleased with the participation.

If you have not received an email from David Holt of CSCW Systems regarding how to access the ACR, [contact the College](#) as soon as possible.

Some tips...

1. Complete by May 31, 2013 so you can renew your registration.
2. *Save!* It takes an hour depending on how much time you spend looking at the resources. If you want to do it in parts or you are interrupted you can return to complete Parts A & C at a later time. Part B must be done in one sitting.

Is our website up-to-date, informative and user friendly? Are your needs for information met through inquiries which are addressed in a timely manner? If you and your colleagues would like an update on College activities please invite our Registrar Kathy Corbett to hold an information session in your region.

Finally, the symposium stressed the importance of feedback to improve competencies in the many roles we play in our professional lives. Serving on the COTBC board is one of these roles. Using the information presented at the Montreal Symposium, we reviewed our COTBC board leadership competencies established in 2006. This review will inform plans for an individual board member evaluation tool — an example of our ongoing quality assurance activities.

The COTBC strategic plan is the basis for informed discussion and decision-making. We discussed various methods to ensure the plan is front and centre in all our decision-making. Please take a minute to review [Strategy 2015 on the website](#). We have an obligation to keep you and the public informed of Board decisions. Please watch for future issues of *InStep* and news on the College website.

See you at the CAOT Conference in Victoria. Happy Spring!

Registrar's Reflection: Collaborative Regulation

The Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) is a not-for-profit corporation with a board comprised of a member from each province's regulatory organization responsible for registering/licensing occupational therapists. Our affiliation with ACOTRO has made inter-provincial mobility easier and has also saved costs with regards to the development of standards of practice and most recently, provision of assessments for internationally educated occupational therapists.

Working together to advance quality regulation in Canada, ACOTRO created the third edition of the *Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada (Essential Competencies)*. Validated by occupational therapists across the country, including many BC occupational therapists, the third edition describes the essential competencies required of an occupational therapist to practice in Canada, for both clinical and non-clinical work, as well as integrated inter-professional competencies.

In 2010, ACOTRO secured over \$2 million of funding from the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition program. COTBC is the lead on this initiative. This funding allows us to complete our Harmonization Project aimed at implementing a common assessment approach for qualification and competence-based assessment of Internationally Educated Occupational Therapists (IEOTs). Creating a national assessment process for internationally educated occupational therapists advances COTBC's ability to provide transparent, objective, impartial and fair assessment of an IEOT wishing to practice in BC.

3. Don't press the submit button until you have completed all three parts.

Please complete the Evaluation. Your feedback will help develop the ACR to further support your competence.

Fees Increase to Cover Growing College Responsibilities

Since the changes to the Health Professions Act were enacted, the responsibilities of the College have increased dramatically. The requirements for quality assurance programs and the complaints (Inquiry) process, in particular the Health Professions Review Board empowered to review the decisions of the College's Inquiry Committee, are two such examples.

Putting the right systems and people in place necessitated this responsible Board decision. Cost sharing and collaborative initiatives with other Colleges will continue but are not sufficient to manage growing costs. While nobody likes to hear about increased fees, registrants can be assured the money is being used to fund critical initiatives in an increasingly challenging regulatory environment.

[Click here](#) for this year's fee schedule.

In addition, the ACOTRO collaboration made possible the development of an ACOTRO website launched in September 2012. This website provide is a hub for IEOTs to access information on registration requirements in all provinces. The final activity under the Harmonization Project is the mapping of the *Essential Competencies* to the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam (NOTCE) administered by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT). This assures governments that this entry-level requirement for Canadian graduates meets the national standards of practice.

Strengthening our BC Health Regulatory Organizations or the "HRO" network is also an important activity. Comprised of the Colleges regulating health professions in BC, the HRO has working groups for information exchange regarding quality assurance programs and patient/client relations programs. It also establishes a formal liaison with the Ministry of Health. Joint education sessions create opportunities for Colleges to provide inter-college professional development. In April, the HRO Patient Relations Committee was able to piggy back on a College of Massage Practitioners of BC workshop for their registrants on professional boundaries. Professional Boundaries: Where the Rules & Human Behaviour Intersect had 65 attendees from 15 colleges, four attending from COTBC. Another education day is already planned and the vision is to create regular education days for college staff to share good practices. Other joint projects are also planned which enable all Colleges to share valuable resources.

COTBC was invited along with other Colleges to attend a meeting of the Council of Chief Nursing Officers of BC. This first meeting provides a promising bridge to facilitate future regulatory and health authority conversations on how we can work together for patient safety and access. Collaborating with the College of Physical Therapists of BC has allowed us to share consultant costs on the development of our quality assurance programs. As I write this article, it is clear I could provide many other examples of how COTBC is living the collaboration value. It is a worthwhile return on investment and certainly provides greater value that perhaps we might have been able to accomplish on our own.

Regulation is complex and costly with the increasing obligations being placed on Colleges. The benefits of and qualities of strong inter-professional collaboration is likely not a new concept to any occupational therapist practicing on high functioning health teams. For the College, the expectations have been ramped up and collaborative self-regulation offers the opportunity to work more closely with our many partners. The possibilities are exciting and our College has had from its very first strategic plan to the latest version, the goal of building and enhancing our collaboration. It makes sense for patient/client safety, and it makes sense for the College positioned to create regulatory supports for promoting and enhancing collaboration.

Conference Board of Canada. (2007). *Achieving public protection through collaborative self-regulation: Reflections for a new paradigm*. Ottawa, ON: Author

Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO). (2011). *Essential competencies of practice for occupational therapists in Canada*. (3rd ed.) Toronto, ON: Author.

If you would like to read more about where your fees have gone and the growing demands, please review the College's [annual reports](#).

You may also wish to contact the Registrar Kathy Corbett at 1 (866) 386-6822 or email kcorbett@cotbc.org.

Registration Renewal Opens Next Week

Please complete your annual registration online or mail the renewal form and fees to the College office before June 30, 2013. This will avoid penalty fees and the risk of cancellation of your registration.

Your username is your COTBC registrant number and your password stays the same as last year but will be emailed to you next week.

If you have any questions, please [contact us](#). We will be happy to assist you.

The Future is Here: Leading Solutions

COTBC staff, consultants and the Continuing Competence Committee are presenting two papers on the Quality Assurance Program. Please join us.

Thursday, May 30 at 3:30

Government of British Columbia. *Health Professions Act* [Section 16 (2)(k)]. Retrieved from http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96183_01

pm

T58 - Using key features cases to assess clinical decision-making and competence

Saturday, June 1 at 11:00 am

S24 - Practical solutions for designing a quality assurance program

Welcoming our New Public Board Member



Sharon Apsey began her career as a primary school teacher in British Columbia. She then spent the next five years teaching abroad, first in California, and then in Turkey and Columbia. When she returned to Canada, Sharon worked as a substitute teacher and then in the medical services field as a clerical supervisor and bookkeeper.

The connections among education, employment, housing and health are very apparent to Sharon. She has extensive volunteer work with primary aged children and their families both in Canada and developing countries. Sharon currently volunteers with the Glenshiel Housing Society, a non-profit housing society for seniors. She is vice president of the board and co-chairs the governance committee. Sharon is also a former member of the Oak Bay

Volunteer Services Board where she focused on the needs of seniors and vulnerable members of Oak Bay and served as chair of the personnel committee. Sharon continues to volunteer her time at the office dealing directly with clients on a weekly basis.

Sharon is also actively involved in politics. She has worked as an assistant to provincial and federal members of parliament, and held many volunteer positions including president of the provincial wing of the federal party.

Competence Check - Third Party Requests

A recent theme has centred on third party requests to restrict information provided to clients. Two examples are highlighted below:

- A referral source has specifically requested that an occupational therapist **not** provide a client with a copy of his/her assessment report.
- A referral source asks the occupational therapist to restrict the choices of equipment suppliers (vendors) provided to clients.

There are several resources available on the College website to assist occupational therapists with their problem solving and decision-making regarding these requests. These include our *Code of Ethics*, the *COTBC Bylaws (Part 6)*, the *Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada (Essential Competencies)*, advisory statements, and practice guidelines. PDFs of all of these documents are found in the [online Registrant binder](#) on the College website.

It is paramount, in the situations above, to determine *who is the client* and to differentiate the client from stakeholders (for example, a referral source, a funder or payer for occupational therapy services).

"Clients may be individuals, families and/or groups, agencies or organizations receiving care and/or services from a registered occupational therapist. 'Client' is synonymous with 'patient' or 'consumer', and means a recipient of occupational therapy services." [COTBC Code of Ethics]

Once the 'client' is determined, all other individuals, groups, or organizations who have a vested interest in the occupational therapy services provided to the client are stakeholders. The Oxford Dictionary defines stakeholder as "a person with an interest or concern in something, especially a business."

In addition to the College resources and our profession's frameworks of client-centred practice, the *BC Health Professions Act* also emphasizes the primacy of the active involvement of the client. Therefore clients' well-being and clients' rights to access information about themselves must always be reflected in our practice and decision-making.

The *Code of Ethics* provides further guidance. Under Honesty and Transparency (p.8), occupational therapists are expected to "*communicate openly and honestly in a clear and caring manner, and respect the client's right to comprehensive information regarding occupational therapy services.*" *More specifically they are to identify any competing interests and expectations of all stakeholders, including themselves, and in situations of real or perceived conflict of interest take appropriate action in the best interest of the client.*" Under Dignity and Worth (p. 2) occupational therapists are to "act in the best interest of the client to maintain trust, and do not exploit the professional relationship for any personal, physical, emotional, financial, social or sexual gain."

The occupational therapist must also meet his/her professional responsibilities as outlined in the *Essential Competencies*, Unit 1 (pp.13-14). Here we are required to demonstrate our commitment to client well-being, manage conflicts of interest (real or perceived), and ensure the terms of agreement in a contract with a payer do not contravene our professional obligations to a client.

Decisions respecting the collection, access, and sharing (disclosure) of information must also be in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* for public bodies and the *Personal Information Protection Act* for private organizations. In the Advisory Statement, *Providing Clients Access to and Releasing Occupational Therapy Information* (COTBC, 2009), the following is advised:

"Occupational therapists may be asked by organizations that contract their services to restrict client access to information. Occupational therapists cannot agree to contractual provisions which are inconsistent with their statutory obligations under privacy legislation or in Part 6 of the College Bylaws. It is important for occupational therapists to avoid signing contracts that are not consistent with those obligations."

Consent and communication are also essential in these situations. Occupational therapists should be clear and upfront with their clients before initiating and during the provision of occupational therapy services to ensure that clients are aware of the role of the occupational therapist, the services that will be provided. This enables the client, or designated representative to provide informed consent to the proposed services. Clients should also be informed of the interests/involvement of stakeholders. Occupational therapists also need to use effective communication, delivered in a respectful manner, to support the collaboration with stakeholders that promotes safe, ethical, and effective practice. (*Essential Competencies* – Unit 5).

As each client is unique, so will be the decisions respecting occupational therapy involvement and service delivery. I have found it very helpful to consult and reflect on the COTBC documents referenced in this article to provide foundational information for ethical decision-making as I speak with occupational therapists. Using the Decision Making Tool enclosed with each College practice guideline and introduced in this year's Annual Competence Review has guided the identification of the risks presented by clients, therapists and their situations, and the development of strategies to manage these risks to reduce the probability of harm and support positive outcomes.

I look forward to speaking with and meeting many of my occupational therapy colleagues in the future.