The mission of the COTBC is to protect the public by regulating, advocating and advancing safe, ethical and quality occupational therapy practice in British Columbia.

Checking In On Competence

B.C. occupational therapists will soon have the tools to help them check their own competence. Results from the pilot study that was conducted last summer indicate that with minor revisions, the Self-Assessment Tool and Professional Development Plan and Guide are ready for distribution to registrants. These are the initial components of the college’s Continuing Competency Program.

continued on page 6...
Message from the Chair
Caroline Ehman

The college’s sixth year of operation promises to be a landmark year, as we launch several documents designed to help meet our mandate of providing safe, ethical and competent care to British Columbians. The January board meeting was action packed with presentations from the Continuing Competence, Client Relations and Standards committees. Board decisions made at this meeting allow for the introduction of phase one of the Continuing Competence Self-Assessment and Professional Development Plan, and the release of our latest guideline, Collecting, Recording and Protecting Client Information. Exciting work continues on the final drafts of the revised Code of Ethics and the guideline to prevent sexual misconduct. Watch for the release of these later this year.

An important role of the board is to ensure sustainability of board operations. At the January meeting, Mary O’Callaghan led us through an Enterprise Risk Management process designed to support the development of a risk management plan. The result of this process will help the board to update its strategic plan at the April meeting and ensure that the organization has mechanisms in place to continue to meet its mandate.

As I begin my new term as Chair of the COTBC Board, I wish to recognize and thank Jillian Rihela for her excellent contribution as chair for the past year; she will continue on as an elected member. On behalf of the board, our profound thanks also goes to Mary O’Callaghan, public member, who stepped down at the end of January. Members continuing on the 2006 board, in addition to Jillian and myself, include: Jan Gauthier, Jeff Boniface, Angenita Gerbracht and Jennifer Dickson. We are honoured to be re-elected, and promise to represent you well. Nancy Sheehan and Lynda Casey will continue as public members and we welcome Duncan Little as a new public member.

2006 will be a challenging and exciting year for both the board and registrants. The efforts of several committees have come to fruition and the results are designed to support registrants in the delivery of safe, ethical and competent care. We look forward to your feedback and active involvement with the college.
Message from the Registrar
Kathy Corbett

Reflecting on Practice Guidelines

Throughout the year I continue to respond to many practice questions from registrants and the public. Questions may raise a professional responsibility issue that is resolved through interpretation of a college bylaw, such as what to do with client records when closing a private practice. More often, the question is less black and white. It requires discussing with the registrant the relevant practice or ethical principles to assist the registrant to develop a framework for decision making on a particular topic.

Tracking frequency of such calls and grouping the data into trends assists the college to develop resources and supports for practice. Supports may include articles in the newsletter, updates on the website, topics for presentations or development of a practice guideline. Included with this newsletter mailing you will find a new practice guideline titled Collecting, Recording and Protecting Client Information. This guideline was developed as a direct response to the high frequency of calls from registrants, employers and the general public on professional responsibilities for “documentation”.

What is a guideline?
COTBC publishes practice guidelines to assist occupational therapists in meeting the Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada, 2nd Edition (2003) through:

• increasing registrant knowledge of responsibilities;
• describing expectations for practice;
• defining safe, ethical, competent practice; and
• guiding critical thinking for everyday practice.

Guidelines aim to increase registrants’ knowledge and application of a particular essential competency area to enhance their practice. The guidelines are developed systematically through a process of literature reviews, expert evidence and, where needed, legal review. Guidelines are developed by the Standards Committee and must be approved by the college board.

Guidelines are not mandatory but communicate recommendations for practice that inform decision making and support prudent practice. This is reflected by choosing words such as “should” versus “must” and “shall”. Think of a guideline as a word to the wise, registrants are ultimately accountable for their decisions in everyday practice.

Why this guideline?
Calls to the college have increased each year on the topic of client records and record keeping. In 2003, twenty-two telephone calls were about record keeping; in 2005, this total rose to 68 logged telephone calls on the same topic. In some cases, organizations were developing internal record keeping policies and wanted to confirm compliance with college approved guidelines or standards. Other questions included: What is the minimum frequency to document on the client health record? What is the required content? Is the occupational therapist required to release a copy of my report to me? How long do I need to keep a client record? What are my obligations when documenting within an interdisciplinary report? What do I do with my rough notes and test forms? Are electronic signatures acceptable to the college? Does a client or funding agent have the right to change my report?

continued on page 4…

Calls to the college about client records and record keeping have increased 258% between 2002 and 2005.
In some cases, organizations were developing internal record keeping policies and wanted to confirm compliance with college approved guidelines or standards.
What is in the new guideline?
The title Collecting, Recording and Protecting Client Information focuses attention on primary considerations for record keeping from the client perspective. In keeping with the college’s first practice guideline, Assigning OT Service Components to Unregulated Support Personnel, this guideline includes a critical thinking and decision making tool. This tool encourages reflection and risk management regarding the management of client information in your practice. A checklist is also provided for those interested in self-evaluating their own professional practices and identifying areas for improvement.

Following the college’s commitment to quality improvement, we will be seeking feedback from registrants and other stakeholders about this guideline later in the year. Opportunities for discussion through college presentation sessions are also available on request.

Future supports for registrants
To date, our practice guidelines have been reactive – developed as a response to a need identified by registrants who were motivated to contact the college. The Standards Committee has also identified the need to be proactive with our guideline and advisory statement development. Canvassing registrants, the public and other stakeholders may be one way to do this, but connecting with registrants on everyday practice issues has proven to be an effective method of supporting occupational therapists. Personally, I am pleased that registrants are confident and comfortable in contacting the college and continue to view the college as a resource.

Reference

Keep your calls coming!

It’s Coming – Annual Registration Renewal
Registrants can expect to receive their annual renewal form by May 18, 2006. As always, the renewal deadline is June 30 and renewal of your registration is required to legally practise in British Columbia. The fee remains at $350. Please be sure you fully complete your renewal form, and that you have signed the declaration and provided verification of your professional liability insurance.

Registrants who fail to renew their registration by July 31 cease to be registered, must pay a late fee and are not able to work until their registration is reinstated by the board of the college. Employers are notified when a registrant ceases to be registered.

For convenience, registrants may return their completed renewal form anytime along with a post-dated cheque dated July 1, 2006. This gets the form off your desk and helps the college process registration materials in a timely fashion.

Registration is a professional responsibility. It assures the public that you are in compliance with the Health Professions Act and the college bylaws, and that you are entitled to practise as an occupational therapist in the province of British Columbia.
Welcome to Dr. Jarus

On February 16, 2006, the UBC faculty welcomed Dr. Tal Jarus to her position as Head of the Division of Occupational Therapy at the UBC School of Rehabilitation Sciences. She has extensive academic experience in research, teaching, graduate supervision and administration. Her most recent previous position was Associate Professor and Chair, as well as Head of the Graduate Program, in the Department of Occupational Therapy at Tel Aviv University in Israel. Dr. Jarus earned a BOT at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and completed her MA and PhD in occupational therapy at New York University. Dr. Jarus’ primary area of research and graduate supervision is motor learning, with an emphasis on skill acquisition, retention and generalization. Other research interests that she pursues include work and work-related injuries, and the use of technology in occupational therapy.

Pending Changes

As many occupational therapists are aware, the School of Rehabilitation Sciences has been grossly under-funded for sometime. In August, 2005 Dr. Brenda Loveridge became the interim Director of the School and has since requested stable, core funding from UBC to address this issue. There is no answer yet to this official request.

In September, faculty members in the School agreed in principle to ‘disestablish’ the School and move towards creating separate schools for each profession, providing there are sufficient human and financial resources. As of early March the decision to separate the schools was put on hold by the Faculty of Medicine. However, both Dr. Gavin Stuart, Dean of Medicine and Dr. Loveridge have confirmed that the Director position for the School of Rehabilitation Sciences will no longer exist as of April 1, 2006. There is no reason to believe this situation will impact on the 2006 admissions for MOT. We are pleased to announce that there were over 160 applications to the MOT program. The present admission capacity is 40.

Comings and Goings

A fond farewell…

Mary O’Callaghan, public Board Member stepped down as her appointed term expired from the board on January 31, 2006 but has agreed to stay on the Quality Assurance Committee’s Code of Ethics Review Steering Panel. We’re very happy to see her continued involvement.

And a warm welcome…

Duncan Little will replace Mary on the board as one of three public board members appointed by the government. Duncan is a chartered accountant and a partner with Meyers, Norris and Penny, LLP. He has lived and worked in Abbotsford, B.C. since 1977 and is very active in his community. Duncan is a past director of the International Air Show, a founding member of the Abbotsford Community Foundation, and an active Rotarian. He also coached minor sports for many years and was very involved in the 1995 Summer Games. Duncan looks forward to serving on the college board and sees it as a way of diversifying his interests. We look forward to his involvement and welcome the wealth of experience that he brings to the board.

Mary Clark is the college’s first Director of Program Development and Communications. In this role Mary will assist with the development of practice guidelines and other college documents. She has over 20 years of experience in communications and recently completed her Masters in Distance Education. The college is starting to actively use online technologies for its committee work. Introducing this process to other committees and developing online practice resources will be another focus of Mary’s work in the coming year.
Checking Competence... continued from the front cover

Registrants will receive their packages the first week of August and will have until February 15, 2007 to complete the self-assessment and professional development plan. Registrants will be required to submit a declaration form beginning in 2007 and each year thereafter. The self-assessment can be done bi-annually, although occupational therapists are encouraged to do the assessment whenever a major practice change occurs, such as moving from hospital-based to community care or providing services to a different client population.

The goal of this component of the Continuing Competency Program is self-reflection and maintenance of individual competence. Occupational therapists review their own application of the essential competencies in practice to determine learning needs, then develop a plan to address the areas needing improvement or enhanced knowledge. It empowers the individual registrants to assess and maintain their own competency. They are required to maintain their self-assessment record and professional development plans for five (5) years and, if requested, produce evidence of completion of the requirement.

How Were the Components Developed?

The Self Assessment Tool was developed based on the Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada, 2nd Edition (ACOTRO, 2003). The College of Occupational Therapists in Ontario (COTO) generously provided their permission to adapt their self-assessment tool, and shared their research on the use of the tool with Ontario occupational therapists over the past five years. Self-assessment is also being used by Alberta occupational therapists and many other health professions.

A pilot study was conducted by COTBC during the summer of 2005. Results of the study were extremely positive. There were 96 registrants who volunteered to complete the pilot study. Of that, 63 participated, with 62 completing the survey tool. This reflects a 64.5% response rate for a task that took a registrant somewhere between two to four hours to complete.

The Continuing Competence Committee’s target for the pilot study questions was “that 80% of respondents would rate each question as either 4 (agree) or 5 (strongly agree).” Of the ten checking competences...

Profile of registrants participation:

Urban/Rural:
- Rural: 19%
- Urban: 68%
- Both: 13%

Public/Private sector:
- Public: 81%
- Private: 13%
- Both: 6%

Nature of practice:
- Non-clinical: 7%
- Most/all clinical: 86%
- Most non-clinical some clinical: 7%
questions rated on this 5-point Likert scale, nine were above our target. The survey also collected information on the registrant’s profile (see charts, page 6), the time it took to complete the tasks (see bar charts, page 7) and qualitative information on difficult-to-rate items and supports registrants might need from the college.

**The survey results indicate that:**
- The self-assessment was useful in reflecting on essential competencies.
- The self-assessment was helpful in identifying areas for improvement and establishing a professional development plan.
- Completing a self-assessment and professional development plan was meaningful and relevant to practice.

**Registrants also requested the following:**
- Information for employers to increase their awareness of the college’s expectations for continuing competence.
- Supports for completion such as workshops, samples of professional development plans and a place to go for questions/support.
- Easy access to documents such as online or CD versions.

The college will be integrating these suggestions into our launch strategy and activities to sustain the program. Registrants will receive more information with their continuing competence program package this summer.

Recent changes to the *Health Professions Act* underscore the importance of continuing competency programs for self-regulating professions. This component of the college’s program will promote high practice standards, and demonstrate to the public our commitment to ongoing competency. Watch for your package in August.

**Members of the Continuing Competence Committee include:**

Emma Christensen (chair)
Dawn Daeschel
Isabelle Boisvert
Risa Greenwood
Jennifer Dickson

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**Years of practice**

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**Time to complete professional development plan**

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In step with self-regulation

- Reflecting On Our Professional Competencies

This new column is designed to encourage occupational therapists to reflect critically on their current practices and make decisions that ensure the delivery of safe, ethical and competent care. We encourage you to discuss the questions with colleagues, jot down a few thoughts before reading the answer, and enhance your accountability practices.

Q: I am starting my own practice based out of my home. What information should I consider to develop my records management policies?

A: Part 6 of the college bylaws places stringent professional obligations on registrants to ensure the proper collection, use, storage and disposition of personal information because of the highly sensitive nature of health records and health information. For example, you have an obligation to protect and maintain the confidentiality of personal information and to ensure all records containing personal information are safely and securely stored.

You should also familiarize yourself with the Personal Information Protection Act or PIPA outlining your legal obligations in B.C. There are several toolkits provided through the website of the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of B.C. at www.oipcbc.org such as conducting a privacy impact assessment or a model privacy statement for your clients. Links to PIPA and other related websites are available on the college website.

Consider the following practices:

• Develop a privacy statement for your clients explaining how confidentiality and security is maintained.

• Develop policies for client consent on what information is being collected and consent for what information can be shared with others.

• Develop policies that inform the clients of their rights to access to their records and how this will occur;

• Establish a secure system that prevents access to client files by others in the home. For example, don’t use the same computer your child uses for his homework or surfing the Internet.

• Plan for record retention. Establish adequate and secure storage for files when clients are discharged.

• Plan for secure communications with other providers involved with your clients.

Q: How long do I need to keep occupational therapy client records?

A: Occupational therapy records are personal information and must be retained for a period of ten years past the last date of discharge. If the client is a child, the record must be retained for ten years past the child’s 19th birthday. Ensure storage is secure. Refer to the bylaws section 82 for storage and retention obligations for personal information, as well as disposal requirements.

Q: I am closing my practice and moving out of the country. What should I do with my clients’ files?

A: You are responsible for ensuring that clients have continued access to the occupational therapy information in the record. Section 83 and 84 of the college bylaws provide for the manner of disposal of records and obligations of a registrant ceasing to practice. For clients continuing with services, you may dispose of the records by transferring the records to another registrant, or with the client’s consent, to another health care agency or health care practitioner. You may choose to transfer the record to the client. If you have met the retention obligation, you may also destroy the records in a secure and confidential manner.

If you are ceasing to practise you must also notify the college and provide a written summary of the steps you have taken to dispose of the personal information. Refer to bylaw section 84.7.
Connecting and Collaboration to Advance Quality Self-Regulation

COTBC is an active member of the Health Regulatory Organizations (HRO) of B.C. which is comprised of all regulated health professions in B.C. Through this organization, regulators advance quality regulation in B.C. by networking, sharing information and working together on topics of mutual interest.

Dr. Penny Ballem, Deputy Minister of Health and Mr. Craig Knight, Assistant Deputy Minister, Intergovernmental Relations, Legislation and Professional Regulation attended the January 13, 2006 HRO meeting. HRO members focused on two important topics:

- Developing practical ways to implement a quality assurance approach for regulatory colleges as addressed in the Health Professions Act; and,
- Developing a model for scope of practice reviews when there is a need to consider expansion of competencies for health professions due to changes in science and expansion of practice.

This meeting was in part a response to the discussion paper commissioned by HRO on quality assurance titled Quality Assurance in the Regulation of Health Professions in BC: Philosophical Approach, Principles and Assumptions (February, 2005).

Following this meeting, HRO struck two task forces to develop initiatives for collaboration with the Ministry. One task group is the Quality Assurance Development Task Force and the other is the Scope of Practice Review Task Force. Your COTBC Registrar Kathy Corbett chairs the quality assurance task force and Laurel Brunke, Executive Director for the College of Registered Nurses of B.C. chairs the other group. The goal is to identify projects to advance quality regulation through inter-professional collaboration.

Both of these issues are important to occupational therapists and other health professionals in B.C. Active involvement in these task forces enables COTBC to represent occupational therapists’ concerns regarding the delivery of safe, ethical and competent health services to the residents of B.C. Dr. Ballem encouraged HRO members to continue current initiatives and build new ways to work together.

Legislation updates

– Changes in the Health Professions Act

COTBC endeavours to keep registrants apprised of legislation that impacts on their practice. This column provides only the highlights and we encourage you to seek further information by reviewing the legislation highlighted.

Duty to Report [Health Professions Act – Section 32]

One of the amendments to the Health Professions Act establishes the legal responsibility for occupational therapists to report any unsafe, incompetent or unethical practice of regulated health professionals to the appropriate regulatory body. Brought into force July 1, 2005, duty to report provisions apply to all health professionals governed under by the Health Professions Act.

Duty to report includes reporting in writing to the appropriate regulatory body in circumstances where the registrant believes on reasonable and probable grounds, the person is continuing to practice when:

a. he or she is known to be suffering from a mental or physical ailment, an emotional disturbance or an addiction to drugs or alcohol that impairs his or her ability to practise; or

b. is not competent to practise the designated profession.

A specific provision also requires reporting sexual misconduct by a health professional.

The Act also places a duty on employers to report to the regulatory body when they terminate the employment of a health professional for one of the reasons above.

The duty to report is already a professional obligation under the COTBC Bylaws - Sections 90(1) – (7). This provision in the HPA underscores that the duty is a legal obligation. Registrants should be familiar with this and other amendments to the Health Professions Act.

A link to the most current version of the Health Professions Act is available on the COTBC web site at:
http://www.cotbc.org/resources.php
Update on ACOTRO
– Our National Connections

The Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) is recognized both within our profession and externally as a credible organization focused on advancing quality occupational therapy regulation in Canada. Providing a leadership role from the regulatory perspective, ACOTRO is participating in a number of initiatives. Here are a few highlights.

Internationally Educated Health Professionals – Health Canada

Occupational therapy is one of the priority professions identified by Health Canada for workforce planning. A Health Canada sponsored forum held in November 2005, a follow up from earlier meetings, resulted in the establishment of a project that will be funded by Health Canada to develop a common orientation program for individuals seeking licensure and/or registration in Canada. Five health professions participated in this session including occupational therapy, physical therapy, pharmacy, medical radiation technologists and lab science technologists.

ACOTRO representative: Kathy Corbett, Registrar, COTBC

Internationally Educated Health Care Professionals Workshop on Research “Asking the Right Questions” (Health Canada)

Regulators, practitioners, educators, researchers and professional association representatives from seven priority health professions met with provincial and federal governmental representatives in Vancouver, on December 7, 2005. The goal was to share information and discuss potential research questions which affect the integration of internationally educated health professionals (IEHP) into Canada’s health system. Five research themes emerged:

• Competency versus credentials;
• Language, communication and cultural competency;
• Predictors, facilitators, distracters and barriers for success;
• System Capacity and Infrastructure; and
• Recruitment and Retention.

ACOTRO representative: Kathy Corbett, Registrar, COTBC

Occupational Therapy Workforce Database Project with Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI)

This project is progressing with estimated delivery of the first COTBC data reports to CIHI by October 1, 2006. ACOTRO members finalized an agreement on the Minimum Data Set which is the information that will be collected by all regulators and provided to CIHI. This project will move the profession forward in its ability to participate in health human resources strategies for ensuring our health workforce. All ACOTRO members participate in this project and CAOT is also represented by their Executive Director Claudia von Zweck.
The Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO)

The Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) is the national network of occupational therapy regulators in Canada. All ten occupational therapy regulatory organizations belong to ACOTRO, each of which has been granted the authority in law to regulate the practice of occupational therapists in their respective province to protect the public.

ACOTRO focuses on addressing current issues such as labour mobility (trade & immigration), health workforce planning, recognition of foreign-trained credentials and entry level education as it relates to entry to practice and collaborating on mutual projects to ensure quality regulation of occupational therapy practice in Canada.

Canadian Network of National Associations of Regulators (CNNAR)

ACOTRO was one of the founding members of this federation of national regulatory organizations. It includes self-regulating professions from both health and non-health groups such as professional engineers, accountants and veterinary medicine. Its mandate is to support self-regulation of professions and occupations through activities such as monitoring and responding to federal legislation and policies, or developing and sharing resources on common issues. Current activity is focused on sponsoring a Canadian regulatory conference in 2007.

ACOTRO representative: Françoise Rollin, Présidente de l’Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec.

COTBC and other occupational therapy regulators invest significantly in the work of ACOTRO. Through its strategic planning and outcome-focused work, each organization finds the investment in ACOTRO reaps many rewards.

Workforce Integration Study (CAOT)

This Health Human Resources Development Canada funded initiative of CAOT’s is underway to examine facilitators and barriers to the integration of internationally educated occupational therapists into the Canadian workforce. A literature review has been conducted and regulators, internationally educated registrants and others have been surveyed. Recommendations from the project will be considered by ACOTRO and leadership taken where the recommendations impact the mandate of regulators. ACOTRO is a member of the Project Advisory Committee. ACOTRO representative: Barb Worth, Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.

Occupational Therapy Health Human Resources (HHR) Leadership Group

ACOTRO actively participates in our profession’s HHR Leadership Group. This group, under a secretariat at CAOT, works to ensure coordinated efforts and collaboration for our profession’s human resources strategy. Effective health human resources planning is multifaceted and all perspectives – profession advocacy, education, regulatory and organizational are critical if we are to have success. ACOTRO representative: Barb Worth, Registrar, College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.

Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO)

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ACOTRO focuses on addressing current issues such as labour mobility (trade & immigration), health workforce planning, recognition of foreign-trained credentials and entry level education as it relates to entry to practice and collaborating on mutual projects to ensure quality regulation of occupational therapy practice in Canada.

Collaborative efforts in the last five years have resulted in the signing of the Mutual Recognition Agreement to satisfy our profession’s obligation under the Labour and Mobility Chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade [May 2001; Revised 2005 (in progress)] and the development of the Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada, 2nd Edition (2003). In recent years, collaborative efforts have also resulted in a commitment to establish consistency and congruency across provinces in entry to practice review processes and quality assurance programs such as continuing competence.

ACOTRO Session at 2006 CAOT Conference

ACOTRO is sponsoring its first session at the upcoming CAOT Conference in Montreal. Our session titled Understanding the Essential Competencies of Practice: Relevance and Application to Practice will demonstrate how these competencies are currently used in quality assurance and continuing competence programs. In this practice-based session, occupational therapists with different roles will present their perspective on applying the competencies as managers, clinicians and regulators. ACOTRO thanks CAOT for providing this opportunity at their annual conference.
Address Changes – Let us Know!

Keeping all your contact information up to date is a critical component of registration.

It is your responsibility to ensure your contact information is accurate and current. Up-to-date contact information ensures college mailings are received in a timely manner. Also, COTBC is required under the Health Professions Act to maintain a public register. Information on the status of your registration is accessible to the public by contacting the college. The Act mandates that the register include the registrant’s name, business address and business telephone number.

The college provides members of the public with your registration status, business address and business telephone number when requests for information are received. If you are self-employed, be advised that business contact information (even if it is the same as your personal contact information) is disclosed on the public register.

To update your registrant file, please provide the information in writing via mail, fax or email message to registration@cotbc.org

Upcoming events

Board Meetings

April 29, 2006
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Victoria, B.C.

COTBC Board Meeting
June 24, 2006
9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.
Vancouver, B.C.

Membership renewal
Deadline: June 30, 2006