

## ICT Solutions to OT Practice

Facilitators: Louise Schaper<sup>1</sup>, Dr Estelle Breines<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Perth, Australia; l.schaper@curtin.edu.au

<sup>2</sup>New Jersey, USA; elka@blast.net

### Summary

Approximately 40 WFOT delegates attended this professional issues forum. Attendees represented OTs from Australia, Finland, New Zealand, Singapore, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America.

The aim of the forum was to discuss issues participants see as being relevant to ICT and OT and to formulate specific recommendations and outcomes for increasing the prevalence of these issues amongst the OT profession globally. The diversity and richness of experiences and ideas was fantastic and there was a high level of energy and enthusiasm in the group.

Key recommendations include the development of a special interest group on ICT and OT and virtual working groups. A website and email list will be established to enable OTs from around the world to contribute to ongoing initiatives.

### Introduction

Clinical information systems, the Internet, eHealth, electronic health records, telehealth and personal digital assistants. With continued advances in information systems and eHealth technologies, the health sector is on the threshold of substantial changes. These technologies and others will inevitably become common-place in health and will change the way health care is delivered.

These technologies will change the practice of occupational therapy and will alter the nature and practice of therapeutic relationships, presenting new challenges for the profession.

To prepare for these changes, OTs need to be able to utilise existing and emerging ICTs.

They also need to be aware of, and involved in, current developments and initiatives in ehealth and understand the impact and potential of new technologies on the practice of occupational therapy and what this means for their clients as well as their profession.

### What are the issues that fall into 'ICT Solutions to OT Practice?'

After an introduction by Louise and Estelle, each participant introduced themselves and their interest in ICT and OTs. The group then broke into smaller groups and discussed the following issues:

- How are OTs using ICT?
- What are the needs OTs have re: ICT?
- How do we ensure OTs are aware of developments in ICT and eHealth?
- How do we ensure OTs have a voice in the field of eHealth and health informatics?
- How can WFOT & your professional organisations assist?
- What outcomes would you like to see from today's session?

## Key Issues

The key issues stated by participants are listed below:

### Accessibility

- Equity and accessibility to ICT
- Digital divide increases between the 'haves' and 'have nots'

### ICT specifically for OTs

- Lack of computer systems designed to be used by OTs
- Parallel development of programs such as client records
- No OT client orientated program similar to Medical Director (an Australian doctor-specific program) - needs a local response to start with
- Using technology for assessment of clients (gaming programs)
- Need to develop user friendly and OT specific reports/notes
- Evidence based information including best practice guidelines

### Knowledge

- Need to demonstrate a benefit to OTs and their clients through IT
- In 10 years all health records will be electronic and probably accessible securely online
- Need for OTs to stay abreast of new emerging technologies
- Lack of awareness of what ICT exists that is relevant to OTs
- Lack of knowledge of ehealth and health informatics
- Fear of computer jargon

### Education & Training

- Funding of equipment and training OTs
- Training for OTs undergraduate and technician
- Competency based assessment/training

### Security & Privacy

- Security of information. Data protection

### Organisational Factors

- Hospitals slow to upgrade into IT
  - Lack of money for purchasing
  - Resistance to change
  - Poor change management
- Turf protection by OT, PT, managers, IT dept

### Standardisation and Interoperability

- Lack of common OT jargon

## Outcomes

Participants in this forum came up with the following suggestions and recommendations:

1. Need to **establish and raise profile of these issues** amongst OT profession
2. Establish an international **special interest group** and **virtual working groups** on 'OT & Health Informatics/ ICT in health/ eHealth' that has the ongoing commitment to establishing a presence for allied health within health informatics as well as establishing a place for health informatics and ICT within the profession of OT
3. Create a **website** for the group through WFOT
4. **Publish** in the journals and newsletters
  - theme issues, FAQs, definitions/trends in OT/IT
5. Add ICT speakers to OT **conferences** to discuss ICT issues and solutions

6. A technology themed **conference**. An open conference
7. **Lobbying** professional associations for allied health to participate in IT
8. Information exchange /library/ **clearing house** for information through website, accessible to all OTs (research, experiences, who is doing what?, case studies, contact details for OTs)
9. Possible annual fee to include accessible research information
10. Development of **computer programs** for therapeutic/treatment applications (eg driving simulator)

### Following the Forum

- All participants in the forum gave their names and contact details to the facilitators. All participants will be contacted shortly to confirm their contact details, their interest and availability in progressing the above recommendations.
- WFOT will also be contacted for advice and suggestions on the support and resources they are able to provide.
- Estelle Breines has written an article on these issues entitled '*IT and OT: The 'Now' Millennium*' which was published in *Advance for Occupational Therapy Practitioners* August 7, 2006. This article has generated further interest from OTs who were not able to attend the WFOT professional issues forum. The article can be accessed at <http://occupational-therapy.advanceweb.com/>

### About the Facilitators

*Louise Schaper* is an OT and a researcher. She is currently completing her PhD thesis at Curtin University of Technology on technology acceptance and utilisation amongst Australian OTs. Louise is the Research Director of CHIK Services, a health informatics research and consultancy company based in Sydney and is the Chair of the WA branch of the Health Informatics Society of Australia. Louise has won almost \$30K in research funding this year and has published 12 refereed papers. Louise is passionate about OT, research and technology and is currently establishing a global special interest group on OTs and ICT.

*Estelle Breines*, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, has been interested and heavily involved in the use of computers by OTs for many years (ask her about the time she wrapped herself in continuous-form computer paper!). She is the President of Geri-Rehab, Inc. and Executive Director of Developmental Rehabilitation Services and GR Publications. She writes a regular column for *Advance for Occupational Therapy* entitled 'Activity Notebook.' Dr Breines is an educator, lecturer of international renown, author of numerous journal articles and books. Her work has been cited by more than 50 of her colleagues, including several Eleanor Clarke Slagle lecturers. She is a recipient of many professional awards and honours. The second edition of Dr Breines' book '*Occupations and Activities from Clay to Computers*' has just been published.