

## From the Director

Joyce Salls, OTD, OTR/L, OT program director



► We are pleased to send you the 2016 Chatham University occupational therapy newsletter to share the highlights of our programs over the past year. In this issue we welcome our newest faculty member and academic fieldwork coordinator, Theresa Delbert, to Chatham and wish Cathy Dolhi the best as she retires from Chatham after 16 years of dedicated service!

Enrollments in both our MOT and OTD programs remain strong, and we initiated a new MOT to post-professional track for our MOT students that will begin in spring 2017. This past year marked the 20th anniversary of our first MOT graduating class and 10-year anniversary of our OTD post-professional program. We began our celebration at an alumni event at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association conference in October and will continue the celebration at the AOTA conference in Philadelphia in April. Stay tuned for more information about this event! If you have news to share, please send them my way, or post it on our newly created Chatham University Alumni Facebook page. We love to hear from you!

This issue, as is our custom, contains articles written primarily by our MOT and OTD students, sharing their experiences throughout the past year engaging in leadership, service, and scholarly endeavors.

**Do you have professional news? Are you interested in accessing the online directory? In order to get the most up to date information from your alma mater, please be sure to keep your contact information updated with the Office of Alumni Relations.**

Keep in touch with Chatham and your classmates by visiting [chatham.edu/alumni](http://chatham.edu/alumni). There you can become a member of the alumni directory, view and share classnotes, as well as register and pay for events online! Contact [alumni@chatham.edu](mailto:alumni@chatham.edu) for your unique ID needed to login!

## From the Dean



► Chatham University underwent a significant leadership transition this past summer. Dr. Esther Barazzone, the president of Chatham retired at the end of June after 24 years of remarkable leadership in this position. The Board of Trustees announced that Dr. David L. Finegold was chosen to succeed her as the 19th president in our institution's 147-year history.

President Barazzone, who joined Chatham in 1992, led a remarkable transformation from a small, financially struggling, undergraduate women's college to a fully coed, internationally recognized university with three distinctive schools including the School of Health Sciences, the School of Arts, Science & Business, and the Falk School of Sustainability & Environment. The School of Health Sciences has significantly evolved from Dr. Barazzone's initial vision dating back to 1994/95 when she started the occupational therapy, physical therapy and physician assistant studies programs. It was also under her leadership that Chatham acquired the Chatham Eastside location in 2008, where the occupational therapy program now resides.

On July 1, the University welcomed Dr. David Finegold, a renowned scholar and educational innovator who has dedicated his career to education reform, the design of high-performance organizations, and research on education and skill-creation systems around the world. Dr. Finegold graduated from Harvard University and was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University where he received his DPhil in Politics. ([www.chatham.edu/president-elect](http://www.chatham.edu/president-elect))

We wish Dr. Barazzone the best on her continued journey and we are very excited to be working with our new president, Dr. Finegold.

My best to you all,

# Welcomes and Farewells...



► We are delighted to welcome our newest faculty member, Theresa Delbert, MS, OTR/L to Chatham University! Theresa joined Chatham part-time as assistant professor and part-time academic fieldwork coordinator in January 2016 and became our full time academic fieldwork coordinator in January 2017 as Dr. Cathy Dolhi retired. Theresa received both her Bachelor of Science in Therapeutic Studies and Master of Science in Occupational Therapy from Boston University. Her clinical background includes working with both children and adults in a variety of practice settings including acute care, rehabilitation, long-term care, home care, early intervention, outpatient and school based. Clinical areas of interest include spinal cord injuries and occupation based practice. Theresa is looking forward to working with students and building connections with fieldwork sites in the community.



► We bid farewell to Dr. Cathy Dolhi this year after 16 years of dedicated service to the Chatham Master of Occupational Therapy program, including eight years as academic fieldwork coordinator. Cathy is an outstanding educator, leader, mentor, and accomplished scholar and will be missed by all. She has guided hundreds of students through the program and fieldwork, and is known for her ability to engage students in almost any topic through active learning and the use of humor. We are grateful for her multiple contributions to the Chatham program and wish her the best as she ventures into her new chosen “occupations” in retirement!

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

### Elizabeth Sherman, MOT '16, OTR/L

► Elizabeth Sherman, MOT 2016, set some leadership goals for herself in her last academic term at Chatham. One of her goals was to present at a peer reviewed conference on a topic she was passionate about: trauma sensitive yoga. One year later, Elizabeth presented a 3-hour workshop at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy conference in Lancaster PA entitled “*Trauma Sensitive Yoga: What is Occupational Therapy’s Role?*” and received very positive feedback from the participants! This experience further sparked her interest in continuing scholarly work, and she has applied to be a TEDGlobal 2017 Fellow and present at the TED conference this coming year. Elizabeth was also invited back to Chatham this past



fall as a guest speaker and presented on the topic of trauma sensitive yoga in our Mental Health and Occupational Performance class.

Elizabeth is currently employed as an occupational therapist at the TALK Institute and School in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania, a parent-founded program and Pennsylvania’s only full-day, intensive, fully integrated therapeutic and academic day school for students with autism and other severe speech/language disorders. She continues to bring her knowledge and passion for yoga to her work as a clinician, implementing a yoga program for children at her worksite.

Elizabeth reports that the Chatham University curriculum prepared her well for this new position. She states, “I am forever grateful for my graduate experience at Chatham in preparing me to provide true holistic OT treatment for my students. Chatham’s program provides a multitude of experiential learning opportunities to stress the importance of recognizing the connection between mental and emotional health with physical well-being. I wake up each day and do work I absolutely love thanks to the support of Chatham’s MOT program.”

## MOT STUDENT EXPERIENCE

# West Penn Burn Camp: The Sky's the Limit

Sam Bauer, OTS; Megan Dominik, OTS; Emily Gregory, OTS; Sam Wannstedt, OTS

Over the summer, several students from Chatham University's Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program volunteered at West Penn Hospital's Annual Burn Camp. Chatham's connection with this volunteer opportunity stems from its affiliation with West Penn Hospital via community and educational involvement. The camp is a five-day retreat for children ages 7-17 who have sustained serious burns and received treatment at UPMC Mercy and West Penn Hospital's burn centers. Since the beginning of this camp in 1986, it has been serving individuals who have experienced a burn and endured the challenging recovery process. The camp experience is free to all participants thanks to donations from supporting individuals and businesses.

Burn Camp provides an opportunity for kids to openly express their emotions through bonding and interacting with peers who have had similar experiences. The open atmosphere creates a support system for all the children to share,

listen, and have fun with each other while engaging in various adventurous activities throughout the week. Additionally, because this camp is specialized and staffed by professionals, it gives parents comfort in knowing that they are sending their kids to a safe and fun place. Through these shared experiences, the children are able to improve their self-esteem and create lasting friendships.

The theme of this year's camp was "The Sky's the Limit," which promoted a positive atmosphere for the children to set goals beyond their comfort zones. The camp took place June 4-8. Camp locations consisted of various sites such as Kennywood Park, Camp Kon-O-Kwee in Butler County, and the Carnegie Science Center in Pittsburgh.

Chatham MOT students took part in Kennywood Park and Camp Kon-O-Kwee day. At Kennywood, volunteers monitored the children, socialized, and went on rides with them. The volunteers at Camp Kon-O-Kwee assisted in coordinating outdoor games and activities and playing with the children. The outdoor activities consisted of a multi faceted relay race involving problem solving, collaboration, and peer support. The campers also learned about fire safety and engaged playfully with the firefighters from the local fire department. Camp concluded with a hot air balloon ride, which tied into this year's theme. The activities encouraged team bonding and socialization amongst the campers.

Through this experience, Chatham students were able to demonstrate leadership skills by leading the activities and facilitating a fun environment for camp participants to connect with one another. West Penn's Burn Camp was a great way for the students to positively represent Chatham's MOT program in the community, while further expanding on the skills needed to become a successful therapist.



## MOT STUDENT EXPERIENCE



### An Inspiring Journey Through Evidence Based Practice

Amalia Beltran, OTS; Mark Bianco Jr., OTS; Alexandra McGee, OTS; Sarah Weihe, OTS

► Evidence Based Practice (EBP) is a four-term course required of Chatham University's Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) students focused on the importance of utilizing evidence in occupational therapy practice. During the second semester of this course, students rank predetermined capstone project topic areas based on their level of interest. Students are then assigned into groups for their capstone project. A literature review is conducted and articles pertinent to topic areas are critically appraised by the student groups. The literature review may inspire students to choose to create a survey to obtain new and relevant information. Students then create a poster to present at the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association (POTA) state conference.

The 2016 POTA state conference took place in Lancaster, Pennsylvania on October 14-15. Four students from the Chatham University MOT Program presented their capstone project on the topic of Occupational Therapy and Sexuality. The students presented a literature review and survey results that were gathered over a ten month span. The results of the students' literature review suggest that clients do not have a clear healthcare professional to turn to when faced with questions about sexuality, an important occupation of daily living. Despite recognition of the needs and rights of individuals in

terms of sexuality, many healthcare professionals are reluctant to address the topic (McGrath & Sakellariou, 2016). The findings of this literature review sparked curiosity about whether or not current OT practitioners in Pennsylvania are routinely addressing sexuality with their clients. Information was obtained through a survey created by the students that was posted on the POTA website and sent out through an email by a POTA newsletter. Respondents were current occupational therapy practitioners practicing in adult settings in PA. Presenting the results of this literature review and survey allowed the students to open doors to the discussion of this important topic. This was exciting for the research group, as their findings suggest that it is important to encourage occupational therapy practitioners to approach practice holistically and comprehensively. It was also an excellent networking opportunity for students to engage with practicing occupational therapists from all over the state.

The EBP process goes beyond the state conference presentation and final capstone project. In addition to sharing findings at the POTA state conference, the members were able to participate in the HOPE Rally on Chatham University's campus for LGBTQ pride and Black Lives Matter. This was a great opportunity to bring attention to the issue of

the LGBTQ community. The event also allowed for the members to advocate for LGBTQ clients and have a voice to promote change. The HOPE Rally allowed the group members to express their passion about the subject of their capstone project in an empowering and meaningful way.

Another exciting opportunity was presented to two of the group members through Chatham in September. The students were offered tickets to attend the 2016 Transpride Pittsburgh Conference at the Persad Center in Lawrenceville, as it related to their EBP topic of OT and Sexuality. The group members attended the conference and were able to participate in the medical track with many other medical professionals from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia. The students learned about the history of transgender culture and healthcare accessibility in Pittsburgh, ways to make the clinic a welcoming and safe space, basics about the initial medical care for sex reassignment, and much more. It was a wonderful opportunity to learn about extremely important aspects of client-centered care that are not covered in depth in most occupational therapy programs in the United States. The transgender community is in need of healthcare practitioners that are sensitive to individual needs and willing to learn about a population that is largely ignored. The

[continued on next page](#)

# The TRANSFER of Knowledge!

Caroline Mosher, OTS; Emily Kocian, OTS; Cathi Dolhi, OTD, OTR/L, FAOTA

► Each year in the fall, Chatham University's MOT program provides an opportunity for both first and second year occupational therapy students to gain experience with proper transfer techniques. Through this unique opportunity, students are able to step outside of the lecture setting and problem solve with one another on specific transfer scenarios. Each group consists of two first-year and two second-year students where the second-year students act as the trainers for their first-year counterparts.

In anticipation of Level II Fieldwork, this teaching-learning session enabled the second-year students to practice transfer techniques as well as their ability to instruct others in the strategies. It also provided the first-year students with the opportunity to practice newly learned skills.

Each of the 24 different transfer scenarios described a client with a particular diagnosis. Students discussed the performance deficits,

precautions, and/or safety concerns that might be present in each scenario. Following this discussion, the second year students role played the scenario followed by a repeat demonstration by the first-year students.

After completing four different transfer techniques, all students completed a reflective evaluation about the event's effectiveness and relevance related to transfer competency, clarity of the information provided, and their recommendation for repeating the experience in the future. The students unanimously reported that the experience was meaningful to them and increased their knowledge and understanding of transfer techniques. In addition, the second year students completed a SOAP note on one of the transfer scenarios in which they participated. This documentation component provided an additional

opportunity for practicing skills that will be required on Level II Fieldwork.

This occasion provided both classes with the opportunity to learn from one another and to further strengthen class bonds. The experience helped to solidify the knowledge and skills of the second year students and provided the first year students with a glimpse into what lies ahead for them in the program.

This event incorporated many of the skills that students will utilize in their fieldwork and employment situations. In addition to gaining competence and confidence in transfer training, students were challenged to demonstrate efficient and effective communication, interpersonal, and clinical reasoning skills. The opportunity to practice these skills in a simulated situation helps to better prepare students for doing so in actual occupational therapy practice settings.

## Evidence Based Practice *continued from page 3e*

students left the conference with newfound enthusiasm about being involved in strengthening and creating sustainable networks that are accessible and safe for transgender individuals.

What began as a capstone project turned into an incredible opportunity for Chatham students to explore an emerging area of practice in the community. Chatham's curriculum includes EBP as a vital research component and allows students to gain experience finding relevant evidence through scholarly texts and peer

reviewed journals that can be later applied in practice. This EBP process has inspired the group members to be agents of change in relation to sexuality and occupational therapy. The MOT students hope to lead by example to make therapy environments more sensitive to concerns about sexuality. As occupational therapists already play an intimate therapeutic role in client care, OTs truly can be leaders in creating change and speaking out against the stigma that exists about sexuality in health care.



## MOT STUDENT EXPERIENCE

# STAR: A Hands-On Simulation Experience for MOT students

Caroline Landen, OTS, Alisa Pellegrino, OTS, Brianne Marson, OTS, & Katie Lloyd, OTS

The Simulation Teaching, Academic Research (STAR) center is part of Allegheny Health Network and is used to further the education of students focusing on lifelong learning, innovation, and research (Allegheny Health Network, 2016). Chatham University's Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program includes a STAR simulation lab/experience at West Penn School of Nursing in its curriculum for the summer and fall semesters. During this experience, students were divided into groups of 3 or 4 to implement the role of either an occupational therapist or an observer. The goal of this lab experience was for students to collaborate with classmates and provide constructive feedback on performance as well as further prepare for Level II Fieldwork. Throughout the MOT program, professors have consistently provided feedback to the students during/after labs and competency exams, allowing them to recognize areas for improvement and to refine skills necessary for becoming entry-level occupational therapists. This lab experience was implemented at the point in the curriculum where students could provide valuable peer feedback without professor guidance.

Prior to attempting each simulation scenario, students were given the patient's chart to review together as a group. The first case study involved a male patient with COPD in the ICU and the second involved a male patient in a coma in the ICU. After thoroughly reviewing the chart, all students

entered the patient's room. The professors acted as facilitators from behind a one-way window so that they were not visible to the students. Observers took seats on one or different sides of the room and were not allowed to provide verbal or nonverbal assistance to the student occupational therapists while the session occurred. At the beginning of the session, the student occupational therapists first spoke with the patient to gather information about his personal interests, home setup, support system, and intended discharge plan. Students then performed an initial occupational therapy evaluation and implemented a brief intervention with the patient depending on what they believed were the priorities. After the therapy session concluded, the professors entered the therapy room and instructed the observers to provide feedback to their peers. For the second simulation experience, students remained in the same groups but roles of observers and occupational therapists were reversed.

The peer feedback portion of this lab was managed by MOT students in the evidence based practice (EBP) group which conducted research on peer debriefing and its effectiveness among student groups. In order to determine students' perceptions of peer feedback within an educational setting, students completed a short survey before and after each simulation experience. The four students in the EBP group took shifts to observe other students through the one-way window and

used the information gathered from the surveys and observations in their EBP Capstone project.

This STAR simulation experience allowed occupational therapy students to gain a better understanding of a clinical setting. Most importantly, this experience challenged students to think critically and collaborate within the two-person team to successfully evaluate and treat the clients while remaining professional and flexible. The observing peers provided feedback regarding treatment styles, body mechanics, and therapeutic use of self from their perspectives. The majority of the feedback offered was constructive and positive as well as informative and reflective. Feedback was not given by either professors or the EBP group which allowed the students to learn from each other while being in a controlled situation/environment.

Overall, this experience fit well into the Chatham University MOT curriculum and allowed students to use critical thinking skills as well as provide constructive feedback to peers. This lab increased knowledge of ICU equipment, medical terminology, and therapeutic use of self while implementing a treatment session with the client and caregiver based on client priorities. Essentially, students worked collaboratively with peers and valued others' feedback, which are important qualities in the field of occupational therapy.

# Walking for Awareness

Carlie Bieranowski, OTS, Anne Brady, OTS, Melissa de Ryk, OTS, Jana Meister, OTS

► August 27, 2016 started as any other summer day. It was bright and sunny with the slightest breeze from the Monongahela River. Slightly to the south, at the Highmark Stadium of Pittsburgh, a group of Chatham Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) students gathered along with faculty, friends, and family. By their sides stood individuals from across the state to take a stand for suicide awareness and prevention at the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) annual Out of the Darkness Community Walk.

The walk stretched a round trip of three miles along the river. Those who attended expressed the love they have for those whom they have lost through suicide. Around their necks lay colored beads that represented various losses and personal struggles. Some wore shirts commemorating their loved ones and other participants carried posters with images and memories as they walked.

Before the walk began, there were activities for children, fundraising, and crafts to create memories of loved ones who were lost to suicide. Many key speakers shared their personal experiences, poems, and expressed their gratitude to the crowd of participants. One particular individual had taken several buses and many hours to arrive from out of state. Tears were shed and memories shared as attendees were aware of the different stories, yet same unfortunate circumstance that connected them all.

As the hundreds of participants stood to recognize the overwhelming commonality between them, a flock of doves was released to Andra Day's gentle song *Rise Up*. It was with heavy hearts that they began AFSP's annual 5k walk.

The AFSP is a non-profit organization dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research, education, and advocacy (AFSP, 2016). Their mission is to "save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide" (AFSP, 2016). Members from the Pittsburgh chapter of the AFSP helped to run the Out of the Darkness Community Walk, and some spoke about their personal experiences. The Out of the Darkness Walk in Pittsburgh raised \$175,539, exceeding the goal of \$170,000 for 2016 (AFSP, 2016). All of the money raised during Out of the Darkness Walks funds AFSP's mission of suicide prevention research and support individuals who have been affected by suicide (AFSP, 2016).

The Chatham students' involvement in the Out of the Darkness Community Walk started with a student group's evidence-based capstone project which focused on occupational therapy's role in suicide awareness. The evidence found through this process showed that occupational therapists can assist clients who may be survivors of suicide, family members of an individual lost to suicide, or individuals who are suffering suicidal ideations.



Occupational therapists can assist clients in completing the things they most desire to do or need to do on a daily or routine basis. The holistic nature of occupational therapy treatment allows the freedom of recognizing all aspects of an individual in order to help them find their own unique level of independence during their activities of daily living.

Chatham's MOT program's involvement with the AFSP, the Out of the Darkness Community Walk, and the heartfelt effort of Chatham MOT faculty has led to an upcoming exciting event involving suicide awareness. The advocacy continues on April 8, 2017 when Chatham University will hold its first Out of the Darkness Campus Walk. Establishing this event is a great accomplishment of the Chatham MOT program and allows for the continuation of promoting and researching occupational therapy's role in suicide awareness.

To register for this event, visit <http://afsp.donordrive.com/event/chatham>

## REFERENCES

- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). (2016). Retrieved from <https://afsp.org/>
- American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP). (2015). 2015 Annual report. Retrieved from <https://afsp.org/about-afsp/annual-reports/>

# Stand Up for Stand Down: Pittsburgh

Holly Barrett, OTS; Chelsey Coudriet, OTS; Michelle Bonaventura, OTS

► In 2015, homeless veterans made up 47,725 or 11% of the homeless adult population within the United States (Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2015). While this number is extremely high, there are many efforts being made both locally and nationwide to reduce a veteran's risk of becoming homeless. The city of Pittsburgh is helping to decrease this rising epidemic by providing local services at the annual "Stand Up for Stand Down" event. This daylong event was held on September 24, 2016, at Stage AE from 8:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.

Stand Up for Stand Down is operated by the Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania, which is located in the Strip District. In addition to the Veterans Leadership Program, various organizations volunteer for the event including Pittsburgh Mercy Hospital, Operation Safety Net, the VA Hospital and many more. The name of the event is based on the term "Stand Down" that is used in military command. This is a time where the units are able to leave the battlefield and recover at safe and secure base camps. During the "Stand Down," they are able to take care of personal hygiene, receive medical care, eat warm meals, and enjoy time with unit members.

The Pittsburgh Stand Up for Stand Down is a remarkable event where the community can come together each year in hopes to make a difference in the lives of homeless veterans.

The event opened with a memorial ceremony and prayer honoring all military members, both past and present, POW and MIA in all branches of the military, and closed with entertainment provided by the River City Brass Band. The event included free services such as: hot showers, clothing, haircuts, food, personal care items, medical care, and counseling. Throughout the day, the Stand Down event was able to provide resources to hundreds of veterans which were made available thanks to the many donations, volunteers and services provided from local organizations.

Each year Chatham partners with Veterans Leadership Program of Western Pennsylvania to recruit volunteers for the Stand Down event. This year, twelve Chatham MOT students chose to volunteer at the event and run an information table in order to give back to the veterans of the Pittsburgh community. At the table, students provided pamphlets focusing on prevention of health disparities, promotion of healthy behaviors, and engagement in daily living practices. The students also explained the role of occupational therapy with veterans because many of them were not familiar with the profession. Community reintegration is within the scope of OT practice, connecting veterans to resources and supporting integration back into their communities. In addition to the information pamphlets, veterans that visited the table were also asked to write one personal goal, which could have been a goal for the day or for the future. If veterans were unable to write the goal, they expressed their goal verbally. After writing or verbalizing their goal, the veterans then placed a "stone" in a small wishing well to symbolize their



hopes to have that goal come true. The overall purpose of this table was to motivate veterans to achieve the goal that they wrote down or verbalized, whether the goal was to find safe housing by the end of the week, or get a hot shower that day. Each veteran who threw a rock in the wishing well voiced that they would take their goal with them and try to achieve it.

This was a very empowering event to attend for the Chatham students. Although it was heartbreaking to witness the amount of veterans experiencing homelessness, it was an incredible opportunity for the Chatham MOT program to be a part of and give back to our veterans and the community. Seeing the amount of resources come together in one place to support the sacrifices given by these veterans was humbling. This event justified that the profession of OT plays a large role in helping veterans find a sense of role-identity. This can be done through utilizing motivational techniques and encouragement to support the veteran's process for engaging in healthy lifestyle behaviors. Occupational therapists have the necessary skills to work with this population and it is important that we were able to advocate for our profession while providing resources and assistance to the veterans that attended this event.



## Andy Warhol Sensory Friendly Events

Jamie Dullinger, OTS; Brigid Mackey, OTS; Anastasia Panova, OTS; Bianca Vicente, OTS

► Many individuals with disabilities have limited access to community events and resources. Several conditions and diagnoses result in individuals experiencing sensory sensitivity, which causes difficulty in managing the input to their senses such as smell, taste, sight, sound, touch, and pain. Through the work of Ideishi Taylor Consulting, these individuals are given opportunities to experience museums, performances, and many other events. These events are considered “sensory friendly” and allow the individual and their family and friends to participate in the community in an environment that is sensitive to their needs. Sensory-friendly events are created by making environmental alterations and creating designated areas for various sensory needs.

Beginning in the spring of 2016, Ideishi Taylor Consulting and the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania partnered to create an event that includes individuals with varying abilities. The sensory-friendly events at the Andy Warhol Museum aim to meet the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorders, sensory processing disorders, physical disabilities, and other impairments. The event allows young adults

and children to explore and participate in the exhibits at the museum while serving the needs of each group. This promotes community engagement and incorporates the role of occupational therapists to facilitate social participation.

Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) students at Chatham have been given the opportunity to serve at the Andy Warhol Museum events as volunteers. Prior to the sensory-friendly events, MOT students assisted the Museum staff to make environmental adaptations to the exhibits. They also provided advice about the schedule and organization of the events for various group dynamics. Environmental alterations included lighting adjustments at certain exhibits and eliminating sudden and loud sounds. Each floor at the Andy Warhol museum had a designated quiet area with a sensory box for attendees and their families to use when they were in need of a “sensory break.” The box included items such as headphones to eliminate sound, sunglasses for light sensitivity, and tactile activities such as playdoh, textured balls, and various fabrics (satin, silk, wool, etc.). Interactive art was available for attendees to create screen prints, paint, and complete other art activities that were reminiscent of Warhol’s techniques. Attendees were assisted by their parents or caregivers, staff, and occupational therapy students throughout the sensory-friendly events.

Through these events, MOT students were able to gain experience with individuals that had a spectrum of diagnoses, while improving

communication skills with this population and adapting an environment to suit the needs of the consumer. After the events, responses from attendees about their experience were overwhelming positive. One teen participant used his communication board to tell the group, “I am so pleased to be here, Autism is hard, but we are all smart.” Staff reported that “the students were so helpful and insightful. I believe that it a wonderful partnership that benefits the students, my staff and the participants.” Families do not always have a chance to attend events outside of the home due to individual’s unique needs and sensitivity to the environment. This event may have provided the first opportunity for families to attend a public event together without worrying about their loved one. Several attendees enjoyed their experience at the museum and plan on returning for future events. The Andy Warhol Museum sensory-friendly events not only provided opportunities for individuals in the Pittsburgh area, but also is an inspiration and model for other organizations to create an environment that allows access and inclusion within the community. This program has been successful and is expected to be a continued part of the occupational therapy student community service opportunities.



# Books that MOT Students Love

Emily Eckard, OTS; Emily Skaletski, OTS

► Chatham University's Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program works wonders in the classroom, teaching information essential to becoming successful occupational therapists. However, the focus of the program is not to have students earn perfect grades or induce excess stress. The program nurtures and motivates students to critically analyze priorities and interests and to integrate them into practice. There are many books that highlight populations that can benefit from occupational therapy, as well as relating to occupational therapy practice. Since these books are not required components of the curriculum, they are great to read on the beach or curled up on a rainy day. This article will mention some of the popular books related to courses within the MOT curriculum, sequenced by the progression of the program.

During the first term of the curriculum, students learn a great deal about assessment and intervention, among other foundational occupational therapy skills. Two popular books are widely applicable to content during this term. *Left Neglected*, by Lisa Genova, is a book that centers around a woman's experience with left neglect as a result of a traumatic brain injury from a motor vehicle accident. Lisa Genova also spoke at an event at the 2016 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Annual Conference in Chicago, Illinois. Temple Grandin and Richard Panek's *The Autistic Brain* discusses the subtle nuances of vision that could be encountered by occupational therapists who work with individuals on the autism spectrum.

After this first term, students begin to delve deeper into population-specific intervention courses and enter their first fieldwork experience in a pediatric setting. One book related to this subject matter is *Love Anthony*, another book by Lisa Genova, which centers around a child with autism and the family dynamics involved in his upbringing. Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is a book turned play about Christopher, who appears to have autism, but the book never outright states

his having a diagnosis. Heinz Hall will bring this production to the Pittsburgh area from January 3-8, 2017. *Left Neglected* and *The Autistic Brain* also applies to courses during this second term.

In their third term, students engage in an adult-focused fieldwork placement and explore topics related to aging, biomechanics, and environmental modifications. *Still Alice*, another book by Lisa Genova, allows readers to understand the experience of an individual with early-onset Alzheimer's and the disease's effects on her family through its progression. This book also came out as a film in 2014. Jill Bolte Taylor's book, *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*, describes her experience of having a left cerebrovascular accident and her extended recovery.

The final on-campus term culminates with several courses on professional practice, as well as coursework on neurological conditions and mental health. *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey* also applies to courses in this term in addressing long-term recovery needs of stroke survivors. Lastly, *Inside the O'Briens*, another book by Lisa Genova, is about a father diagnosed with Huntington's, as well as the family dynamics impacted through this diagnosis and subsequent effects.

The authors of this article have different areas of interest but are motivated to explore their interests as well as understand a variety of populations in our leisure time. We do not feel obligated to read these books but rather are curious and eager to explore the lives of potential clients. These truly fascinating topic areas provide energy instead of leading to exhaustion and stress that can often happen when solely reading textbooks. Reading books with vivid character descriptions allows these future practitioners to feel as though they are in the character's life, something beneficial in the development of therapeutic use of self. For more fantastic options for leisure activities, see AOTA's OT Connections page for a list of new movies, television shows, and books!



## CONFERENCES

# POTA Conference 2016

Alexis Ferrari, OTS; Alexa Isaly, OTS; Rachel Saunders, OTS

► Promoting evidence-based practice is an important aspect of the Chatham University Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) program's curriculum. All students enrolled in the program completed an evidence-based research project over the course of ten months under the guidance of a faculty member. As a curriculum requirement, students submit a research proposal to the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association (POTA) with their evidence-based research groups. Upon acceptance of a research proposal, the groups are provided an opportunity to present at the POTA annual conference. This year, the conference was held in Lancaster, PA on October 14 and 15. Of the ten total groups, eight were selected to present at the 2016 conference. Over the course of the weekend, the students participated in poster presentations, attended educational sessions, and networked with occupational therapy practitioners.

The following include the poster presentation topics presented by Chatham MOT students:

- 1. Breaking Barriers: Navigating EBP in Major Neurocognitive Disorder**  
Samantha Wannstedt, Alisa Pellegrino, Laura Collignon, Emily Eckard
- 2. Interventions in Skilled Nursing Facilities: Occupation-Based or Preparatory?**  
Kelly Connell, Alexis Ferrari, Emily Gregory, Rachel Saunders
- 3. Let's Talk About Sexuality**  
Amalia Beltran, Mark Bianco, Alexandra McGee, Sarah Weihe
- 4. Occupational Therapy Practitioner's Knowledge and Perception of Multisensory Environment use with Patients with Dementia**  
Emily Skaletski, Caroline Landen, Jessica Copney, Anastasia Panova
- 5. Peer Debriefing: Hello From the Other Side**  
Megan Dominik, Alexa Isaly, Emma Leibowicz, Mary Rectenwald
- 6. Prioritizing Occupational Therapy in the Homeless Veteran Population**  
Holly Barrett, Chelsey Coudriet, Leigha Pehrson, Bianca Vicente
- 7. Reiki: Finding the Energy in OT**  
Madison Chwatek, Caroline Mosher, Emily Kocian
- 8. Sweet Dreams: Caregiver Education for Pediatric Sleep Difficulties**  
Michelle Bonaventura, Jamie Dullinger, Brigid Mackey, Mariah Reitz

In addition to the student's poster presentations, faculty member, Sharon Novalis, Ph.D., OTR/L, presented her research on "Occupational Therapy for Suicide Survivors," to conference attendees. MOT students Carlie Bieranowski, Anne Brady, Melissa de Ryk, and Jana Meister also presented their poster, "Occupational Therapy & Suicide Awareness," in collaboration with Dr. Novalis' presentation. Many other occupational therapy practitioners spoke on important current OT topics, as well. The keynote speaker, Roger I. Ideishi, JD, OT/L, FAOTA, presented on providing opportunities for children and their families to engage in community events all over the country. Dr. Ideishi specifically focused on creating sensory environments that increase inclusion of all consumers.

After attending presentations on the first night of the conference, a Chatham alumni reception was held by the Office of Alumni Relations. The event was free to Chatham students, faculty, and alumni. Appetizers and a drink were provided to those who attended. The event allowed attendees to relax and socialize after spending the day at the conference.

Not only did the students gain valuable knowledge from the conference, but also had the opportunity to obtain monetary awards. POTA student members can apply and potentially win scholarships to help advance their education in occupational therapy. Alexis Ferrari, a Chatham University MOT student, was a recipient of the 2016/17 POTA Scholarship, along with five other MOT students in the state of Pennsylvania.

Overall, the conference enabled students and current practitioners to enhance their knowledge and further professional development in the realm of occupational therapy.



(From left) Emma Leibowicz, OTS; Megan Dominik, OTS; Sharon Novalis, Ph.D., OTR/L; Alexis Isaly, OTS; Mary Rectenwald, OTS

## Cultural Panel: Breaking Down Barriers

Laura Collignon, OTS; Emma Leibowicz, OTS

► Chatham University's mission statement reads, "Chatham University prepares women and men to be world ready: to build lives of purpose and value and fulfilling work. In addition to appropriate professional skills and liberal arts learning, Chatham believes that world readiness means being an informed and engaged citizen in one's communities; recognizing and respecting diversity of culture, identity and opinion; and living sustainably on the planet." ([www.chatham.edu/about](http://www.chatham.edu/about))

Learning about other cultures and communities can break down barriers that have existed for decades. Hosting a cultural panel encourages people to understand and relate to one another, despite

cultural differences. As occupational therapists, not only do we treat a diverse population, but our jobs also give us the opportunity to travel all around the world to practice. This aspect of our profession increases the need to continually strive to understand other cultures in order to provide the most client-centered care.

This year in the Advanced Topics class, a cultural panel on cultural sensitivity and diversity was held. The panel included representatives from the LGBTQIA, African American, Jewish, Muslim, Atheist, and Native American communities. This panel gave the class an opportunity to learn about other communities and enabled the class to reflect on why

cultural sensitivity is so important for our field. The audience members took turns asking their questions that were either directed to a certain panel member or to the panel as a whole.

A few of the topics addressed laws of religion and how to address these differences with clients. For example, a panelist representing the Muslim faith shared the practice of getting ready in the morning in a particular order: wash, get dressed, and then pray. Another topic of conversation was the importance of using the correct or preferred pronoun when addressing the LGBTQIA community. The panel also highlighted the importance of advocacy for clients, such as ordering the proper

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## Global Links: Promoting Volunteer Inclusion

Leigha Pehrson, OTS; Mariah Reitz, OTS; Ryan Najimian, OTS

On July 14, 2016, Chatham Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) students presented their environmental adaptation and modification suggestions to the staff at Global Links. Global Links is a company that provides medical relief and development to help support health improvement initiatives in resource-poor communities while also advocating for environmental-stewardship here in the United States healthcare system ([www.globallinks.org](http://www.globallinks.org)). Global Links partners with healthcare facilities throughout the Mid-Atlantic region to provide a socially and environmentally responsible alternative to sending medical supply surplus materials to landfills. These surplus materials are then sent to hospitals in need throughout poverty stricken countries in the Western Hemisphere.

Global Links initiated contact with Chatham's MOT program after learning about the program's Community Based Fieldwork experience. The commonalities between the two organizations' mission priorities (including respect for diversity, sustainability, and lifelong learning) provided a firm foundation for

the collaboration. Given the large volunteer contingency at Global Links, the organization was interested in consulting with OT students on ideas related to how they could provide a more inclusive environment for the broad diverse volunteer population that serves them and their mission.

As part of their summer coursework in Environmental Interventions, students learn about adaptations and modifications that facilitate accessibility of environments in which people live, work, and play. The students completed a needs assessment to learn about the different types of adaptation and modification ideas that can be addressed within homes and community settings. Environmental adaptations are used to increase occupational performance and participation in activities of daily living. Under the guidance of Professor Amy Mattila, students were separated into groups that focused on common conditions and performance concerns among the Global Links volunteers. For example, students addressed issues associated with limited mobility,

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## Cultural Panel

food for Jewish and Muslim clients. These discussions will further assist occupational therapists in providing the most effective, meaningful and client-based treatment since they will have a greater understanding of what their client's values, beliefs and roles are. As one audience member said, "having background knowledge about a client's religion/culture is an impactful way to keep a session client-centered."

One student shared that clients may have "occupations that are integrated into therapy sessions I should be aware of when scheduling services and planning treatment sessions. This will also extend to the client's family/support system, because it may be important to consider their practices as well." Another individual in the audience stated "I have limited experiences interacting with anyone who practices Islam so I personally thought it was very valuable to learn about her practices... I definitely feel more of a responsibility to stand up for anyone who a colleague may be speaking badly about, regardless if it is a patient or another co-worker." The ideas expressed by the audience exemplified the interest and knowledge gained by the students. In addition, it was beneficial for the cultural minority panel because it provided a platform to express their views and inform clinicians how they can better serve these populations.

## Global Links

sensory hypersensitivity, low vision, intellectual disability, autism spectrum, decreased fine motor skills, decreased endurance, and behavioral disturbances. After students received the specific conditions and performance concerns to address they received an in depth tour of the Global Links facility and participated in a volunteer experience themselves. While volunteering they kept in mind their assigned condition and took notes on different modifications that they might recommend to the overall environment to address the needs of volunteers as a whole.

Some recommendations that the students presented to Global Links included: the provision of a sensory bin for volunteers who would benefit from sensory breaks, a YouTube channel to demonstrate how-to videos as visual aids, and recommendations on inexpensive adaptive equipment to allow people with fine motor deficits to participate in various tasks at the facility. Adaptive equipment recommendations ranged from foam build-ups that could be placed over thin tools, magnetic wands to assist with cleaning up small metallic items, wheeled carts to help people move boxes and other heavy items, and a "FlipFold" device that would make folding clothing



easier. Accessibility recommendations included clearing walkways of debris, taping the walkways so people would know where they could safely navigate, and lowering tables to enhance access for wheelchair users.

This experience provided the students with the opportunity to evaluate an environment and to make recommendations to enhance the occupational performance for the volunteers at Global Links. The suggestions for adaptations and modifications will enable all Global Links volunteers to have the best experience possible while making a contribution to people across the globe. Global Links and Chatham University hope to continue working together to better student and volunteer experiential learning through inclusive participation.

# Culture and Collaboration in Ecuador

Jessica Copney, OTS; Mary Rectenwald, OTS; Kelley Connell, OTS; Madison Chwatek, OTS

► For the past three years, Chatham University's Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) and Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) programs have offered a Global Health Perspectives course which culminates with an international experience. This year, eight MOT students and four DPT students, along with one faculty member from each department and a DPT alumna, traveled to Ecuador to experience the culture first-hand.



Leading up to the trip to Ecuador, the students engaged in an educational course which focused on cultural competence, co-treatment, and intervention techniques. This class gave the students an opportunity to get to know one another and to

develop a better understanding of each discipline. The students were able to work in groups to establish various intervention techniques and discuss strategies to prepare themselves for the cultural experience.

The first weekend in Ecuador was designed to allow all members of the program to immerse themselves in the beauty and culture of Ecuador. Each day was filled with experiences that helped the students apply what was learned in the classroom regarding cultural competence. It also acclimated the students to the culture of the clients they would later be working with. The cultural experiences extended into the weekday evenings outside the clinic. All activities were planned and led by Chatham's Ecuadorian partners and the women that run a free clinic in Ecuador, Elaine Keane, (OTD, OTR/L, executive director) and Susana Albuja (project manager).

During the week, the group enjoyed once-in-a-lifetime adventurous experiences such as zip lining through the Andes mountains to get an exciting bird's eye view of the scenery, white water tubing downriver, and climbing a series of ladders to the top of a centuries old basilica to soak in a view that extended for miles. There were also some more relaxed activities like feeding butterflies out of their hands at a butterfly sanctuary, visiting a lake in a crater of a volcano with incredible views, and a tour of a chocolate manufacturer where they sampled cocoa beans and freshly made chocolate. The students played in a wheelchair basketball game with some residents of Ibarra, ate authentic Ecuadorian food at local restaurants, and shopped at open air markets. This time allowed for the students



and faculty to bond, forming a stronger, more cohesive team.

Starting on Monday morning, the students split into interdisciplinary teams to co-treat in a variety of clinical settings. One example of an occupational therapy/physical therapy co-treat session involved a little girl who had Down syndrome. The PT student focused on balance and stair mobility, while the OT students worked on cognition and social skills.

One of the facilities where the students volunteered was a free pediatric clinic in Ibarra, Ecuador serving clients with a variety of diagnoses ranging from cerebral palsy and hydrocephalus to autism spectrum disorders, Down syndrome and more. The facility is called CRECER, which means "to grow" in Spanish. This acronym is symbolic for the work the clinic does in the community and is emphasized with a tree painted in the pediatric treatment room. Each person who comes to work at CRECER is invited to leave their mark in the form of a handprint as a leaf on the tree.

Another setting that the students volunteered with was FUNHI, an adult day center located across the street from CRECER. This program provides structured, therapeutic activities for the clients. The clients displayed a wide range of abilities from being verbal to nonverbal and ambulatory to wheelchair

# POST PROFESSIONAL OTD STUDENT EXPERIENCE

## Our OTD Journey

Adele Breen-Franklin, OTD, JD, OTR/L & Sarah Corcoran, OTD, OTR/L, HCS-O

► Earning an OTD is a huge undertaking. It is an exciting process wherein clinicians delve back into the heart of occupational therapy. Through coursework and an evidence-based capstone project, students learn more about the distinct value of the OT profession. Chatham University's cohort model elicits a shared experience that reminds OTD students of the importance of "occupation" and connections with others. As two Chatham University OTD graduates, we would like to share some common experiences after achieving this degree.

When asked to write about life after the OTD, we discussed what we enjoyed about the process, but also reflected on how we have changed over the course of the OTD program and beyond. Our professional lives after earning an OTD have been enhanced, but did not always follow the trajectory we initially envisioned. We realized that we share two themes: One theme is that earning our OTD is just one part of our journey as occupational therapists, and the second is that our OTD can also be a new beginning of this journey. We both talked in terms of "before OTD" and "after OTD." In this article, we will share our individual stories and our collective experience.

### Adele Breen-Franklin, OTD '10

I began the Chatham OTD program in the spring of 2009. I had been working as a visiting assistant professor and coordinator of a grant that was designing a psychosocial program for incarcerated women who suffered from mental health issues. Earning an OTD appeared to be the next step in my career as an occupational therapist. I had earned a law degree in 1990, and after my two children were diagnosed with developmental delays, I decided to return to school and change careers from law to occupational therapy. Although I had been working as a school-based occupational therapist, the pull of academia and the opportunity to work on an interesting psychosocial project was too great to resist. As I worked at the university, I enjoyed teaching but I also enjoyed project development. I understood that I might never again have an

opportunity to participate in such an important, meaningful project.

What I loved about the Chatham OTD program was the ability to work and learn with other occupational therapists and apply what I learned as a clinician. All of my classmates (it was a very small class – only four core members) were smart, funny, and passionate about occupational therapy. We shared our clinical experiences and discussed readings. During every stage of the development of our capstone projects, these classmates honestly reviewed my work and were cheerleaders encouraging me to work harder and go farther with my idea. My project was to develop a social group for mothers of children with disabilities. During each stage of the development, my classmates critiqued my research, and my PICO question. I strongly

believe that the final project was well-developed due in large part to their input. I see many of these classmates at the local Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy (POTA) Annual Conferences and at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Conferences. I enjoy hearing about their research and their work, and how they are pursuing their capstone projects.

Life after completing my OTD was, at first, somewhat frustrating. The grant that I had been working on ended, and additional funding was not available, so my position at the university ended. I interviewed at various clinical positions, but could not find the right fit for me. I eventually decided to go back to school based therapy, but was not entirely happy with the decision. While at the university, I had spoken to faculty who knew of faculty openings at other schools. I made some calls, but nothing came of it at first. In particular, I had spoken with a chair of an occupational therapy assistant program who was interested in hiring me, but as seemed to be my luck, there were no openings. But life can be a funny thing, and at an AOTA conference, where I was presenting a poster on my capstone project, I bumped into the same department chair who indicated that she was leaving her position. Days later I received a call about possible interest in an adjunct position at the program. Within six months, an adjunct position became a full-time faculty position. Three years later, I became a full-time faculty member at the University of the Sciences Occupational Therapy program in Philadelphia. I am not only teaching

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## POST PROFESSIONAL OTD STUDENT EXPERIENCE *continued from previous page*

full-time, but pursuing my research interests. I have partnered with a site to continue my mothers' social group, but its development has been a slow and frustrating process. I am pursuing other interests such as the scholarship of teaching and learning, and intergenerational learning, all of which have been well-received by my colleagues. I strongly believe that my Chatham University experience helped me to view everything I do through an occupational science lens.

Looking back, my OTD degree has been an important stepping stone in my academic career. But more importantly, I see my OTD degree as a stepping stone or a new beginning of my journey as an occupational therapist. Through my education, I learned the importance of evidence-based practice, program development, and teaching and learning. I see occupation everywhere - something I don't think I fully understood when I earned my masters in occupational therapy. I also learned that an OTD degree is an extremely important tool as an occupational therapist. But at the same time, you need to make connections and use the tools you learned. Much of what happens after you graduate is up to you. I still am trying to continue my capstone project, and am genuinely disappointed that I could not pursue it in the way I had originally anticipated. But new projects are opening doors for me. I continue to hone the skills I learned at Chatham in my teaching. I have more confidence to network with other clinicians, and have more confidence to speak out about the value of occupational therapy. For the 2017 AOTA Conference, I have several posters accepted and am working with two colleagues on a short session. I'm proud to report

that I am presenting a poster with Joyce Salls about mothers' social groups and support groups. I am also proud to report that my students are also presenting at local and national conferences. Through Chatham, I am "paying it forward."

### **Sarah Corcoran, OTD '15**

I began the Chatham OTD program in the fall of 2013. At this time, I had been working as a performance improvement specialist for Mercy Home Health for two years, after working as a home health OT for eleven years. My clinical experience also included working in an acute care hospital and rehabilitation facility. I had graduated with my bachelor's degree in OT from the University of Scranton in 2000. Before starting the OTD program, I decided that I wanted to teach in OT and would need to advance my degree to begin this quest.

The Chatham OTD program intensely connects students to other OTs and to hard work! I could feel how I was growing as I participated within the cohort. While this time often included reviewing literature and writing intensely after saying goodnight to my two school-aged children, I enjoyed the feedback of my esteemed classmates and the feeling of accomplishment in carrying out my capstone project on mentoring with OT colleagues at Mercy Home Health.

It was strange to end this rigorous experience and have time on my hands. Initially, I wanted to completely relax with my family. Throughout my coursework, we had planned a trip to Ireland, which we took two weeks after my graduation. My family and I will never forget this trip, but this small time

away and big urge to relax created just enough space for me to use as an excuse not to submit my capstone manuscript to a journal. I regret this and write about it so that if you have not submitted your work, you may be encouraged to do so.

Happily, I have met other professional tasks with more fervor. I presented my capstone poster on mentoring at the 2015 Pennsylvania OT Association Conference. Sharing my work at this event helped me to connect with OTs, including some in academic positions who kindly shared advice and introduced me to others. Soon after the conference, I met with my state senator to talk about occupational therapy and the needs of our community. I have met, through these experiences, people who check in to support me in the journey of my career.

Life after the OTD has been different than I expected. There have been moments when I felt frustrated that my planned transition from clinical to academic work was slower than anticipated. I questioned how to begin moving toward academia and how to adjust within my current work role since obtaining this degree. Short of a couple colleagues calling me "Dr. Sarah," not much has changed for me in my job. While I have been invited to more committees and speak up more often, I continue to work in the same role. I have tried to present evidence on mentoring to administrators in my work setting, but organizational change can be slow. I sought opportunities, such as teaching and peer reviewing, but nothing seemed to come back to me. At these times when I felt stuck, it was my Chatham experience that sparked a change in my outlook. Conversations with Chatham faculty and colleagues from my cohort encourage me to keep moving.

# Professional networking in Germany

## A step toward the centennial vision

Karthik Mani, MSc, OTD, OTR/L

► The centennial vision of the American Occupational Therapy Association foresees occupational therapy (OT) as a globally connected workforce. Clark (2013) in her farewell presidential address explicated globally connected workforce as a workforce “in which the international community of occupational therapy practitioners, educators, scientists, and students frequently interact in substantive ways.” Global connections facilitate knowledge transfer, which in turn helps practitioners refine their practices and grow as professionals.

Global connections begin with networking. With technology, global networking has become much easier than ever. However, virtual connections often fail to provide context- and culture-specific knowledge, which are imperative for OT practitioners to engage in best and client-centered practice. Realizing the value of global networking, several OT educational programs in the United States (US) embraced the burgeoning trend of sending students across borders for academic fieldwork placements and international student exchange programs (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2013; Taff & Hoyt, 2012).

In August 2016, students and alumni from Chatham’s occupational therapy doctoral program (OTD) traveled to Germany as part of the Global Health Perspectives course. The overarching aim of the course was to understand the culture, occupational needs of the population, contemporary health issues, healthcare delivery systems, and practice models in Germany with implications for OT practice. The ten-day journey started in Hamburg and ended in Frankfurt, with seven destinations in

between. Two German residents, including a native German, accompanied the delegation throughout the journey to guide and help overcome linguistic barriers. This article briefly narrates the experiences of the delegation, highlighting learnings and insights.

During the journey, course participants met and interacted with German OT professionals with various backgrounds to gain a deeper understanding of systems and issues that influence OT practice and education in Germany. They also visited a variety of practice settings and observed OT service delivery to compare and contrast the OT processes and practice models used in Germany with that of the US. Further, the journey also comprised of a meeting with an official of the Federal Health Ministry, Germany, and a visit to a US army hospital located in Landstuhl, Germany.

The interactions with OT practitioners were of immense value and provided information on practice settings, referral systems, patient population served, treatment approaches used in practice, documentation practices, reimbursement systems, and regulatory systems. German OT practitioners shared their views on how the profession is being perceived in the physician-centered medical community and its impact on their autonomy in practice. The interactions also focused on the challenges they face in their day to day practice such as discontinuity in intervention due to reimbursement regulations and the lack of occupational therapy services in public schools.



The meetings with local therapists gave insight to the current German OT profession wide challenge. This is the debate regarding the need to change the entry level education from “diploma” to “baccalaureate” level. In Germany, the typical entry-level education for OTs is a 3-year vocational diploma; following graduation, individuals are authorized to practice through their respective provincial governments. Following the diploma, formal advanced degree opportunities are limited. At the time of this writing, only a few baccalaureate-level (currently being piloted to determine sustainability) and three masters-level degree programs are available in Germany (A. Blum, personal communication, Aug 7, 2016; A. Netzband, personal communication, Aug 2, 2016; Hochschule fur Gesundheit, n.d.). One school in The Netherlands offers a transitional baccalaureate-level degree for German OTs with entry-level diploma (M. Freitas, personal communication, Aug 8, 2016).

The local therapists are recognizing that the diploma level of education creates a disadvantage for OT practitioners in Germany when most of their European and non-European counterparts enter the workforce with a baccalaureate- or post-baccalaureate level degrees. Some believe that the diploma-level entry may be detrimental to the growth of the profession as it provides limited opportunities for students to develop much

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## Professional Networking in Germany *continued from previous page*

needed research and evidence-based practice skills. Further, limited level of education may influence practitioners' self-perceived competence and confidence in their abilities and advocacy skills (A. Blum, personal communication, Aug 7, 2016; A. Netzband, personal communication, Aug 2, 2016; M. Freitas, personal communication, Aug 8, 2016).

Language has been perceived to be limiting the professional growth and global networking of OT professionals in Germany. One of the practitioners the crew met shared her opinion that the lack of translated materials has limited her professional growth and global networking. She also shared that she felt a dissonance, as the entry-level education has been offered in German with the majority of reference books and literature in English (S. Tauber, personal communication, Aug 2, 2016).

The practice setting visits ranged from outpatient settings to specialized vocational rehabilitation hospitals. Through these visits, the crew witnessed the client-friendly nature of service delivery. Most of the settings were well equipped. One setting that needs mention here is a hospital/care center for people who sustained work-related injuries, located in Halle, where services ranging from acute care to community reintegration are being provided under one roof. The visit to the army hospital helped the crew appreciate the difference between military- and civilian-based OT practices.

The meeting with the federal ministry official oriented the delegation to the German healthcare system and its public insurance program. The presentation and discussion also addressed the logistical and policy issues related to refugee resettlement. Encompassing the needs of refugees into its public insurance program is a significant

contemporary challenge from a healthcare coverage perspective for Germany.

Aside from professional meetings and visits, the delegation also traveled around the country visiting places of historical and cultural importance to learn, immerse in, and experience the local culture. The delegation, through reflective interactions, appreciated the value that German society placed on antiques; their love for outdoor dining, arts, and music; their efficiency- and conservancy-centered attitudes; and their beliefs on work ethics and work-life balance.

In the midst of traveling, the delegation observed accessibility issues associated with narrow roads, cobblestone roads, and prevalent road side parking practices. As a few practice settings the crew visited were housed in multistory buildings that did not have an elevator, the crew reflected on the indoor mobility challenges the clients with mobility impairment may face when visiting those practice settings. One OT entrepreneur shared that she decided to relocate her outpatient practice to an adjacent building to overcome potential indoor mobility issues (A. Netzband, personal communication, Aug 2, 2016).

The delegation also noted accessible public places equipped with ramps, escalators, and elevators. Though "universally accessible" environment across the nation is ideal, the crew observed the inherent difficulties in making all places universally accessible, as German cities such as Berlin and Hamburg are rich with ancient structures amidst modern and post-modern architectures. The crew also reflected on the implications of multiple public transportation options and tickets that are portable across transportation channels (in major

cities) for community mobility related to persons with disabilities.

Readings, interactions, and traveling helped the crew ponder on the influence of the nation's history on the OT profession. One of the practitioners we met narrated the impact that final solution (The Nazi regime's policy of exterminating Jewish people/people with disabilities) had on the growth of the profession in its budding stage (M. Freitas, personal communication, Aug 8, 2016). The crew also discussed the influence of history on the current prevalence rate of disability in Germany.

This rich professional and cultural journey helped the delegation develop a basic contextual knowledge regarding how OT is currently being practiced and regulated in Germany. In addition, the delegation gained a deeper understanding of the impact of contextual factors, culture, history, policies, politics, and reimbursement systems on the OT profession. In turn, the delegation shared valuable information on OT education, practice, and research pertaining to the US.

Significant connections and perspectives were gained from The Global Health Perspectives course to Germany. Occupational therapists in Germany and the US-like in many parts of the world-appear to face identity crisis, fights for autonomy, and greater evidence base needs. The delegation believes that unified targeted advocacy and research efforts by all world members of the profession, through global networking, can elevate the status of the profession across the globe.

In essence, this global networking journey proved to be a valuable learning and knowledge transfer experience for everyone involved.

## Ecuador continued from page 1X



users. The Chatham students were able to use clinical reasoning and problem solving skills to develop group treatment sessions that met the needs of all clients.

The Chatham students also implemented treatment sessions at a nursing home. The first day involved completing interdisciplinary evaluations of the residents. The following days consisted of group treatment sessions focused on meeting the needs of the residents and staff.

At an adult day facility, the Chatham students presented four inservices for the staff. The inservices focused on the identified needs of the facility, which included: fall prevention, exercises, strategies for maintaining cognition, and occupational activities for older adults.

The Chatham students also had the opportunity to visit a seating and prosthetics clinic. Here, the founder of the clinic discussed the process of receiving prosthetics in Ecuador and the challenges surrounding it. This was a very special and unique clinic as they also construct seating and standing devices completely out of cardboard and glue. The students were able to assist in the construction of a few devices that would later be used by children in need.

This program is a unique opportunity for Chatham students to gain hands on experience with clients of another culture and develop skills to co-treat with another discipline. These skills prove to be vital for therapists' professional and personal development.

Students felt that this course helped them gain a new perspective on working with clients as well as working with each other. OTs and PTs often work hand-in-hand with clients and professionals that have diverse values, beliefs and roles. The importance of being able to collaborate with an open mind and have an understanding of the roles of others on the inter-professional team were two of many valuable lessons learned in this experience.

## OTD Experience cont. from page 1X

With gratitude, I have looked at life after the OTD differently within the past few months. I see that the ups and downs that have occurred since graduation are part of my professional development journey. This shift in perspective has been important for me. Realizing that life after the OTD is a process has helped me to take stock of what I have learned and have more patience with myself and others. I feel open to possibilities, including staying connected to clinical practice and seeking ways to get involved in OT advocacy. I was recently invited to plan some guest lecturing at a local university, which has been a just right, exciting challenge for me. I realize now that obtaining this degree was not an end, but a beginning and I am ready for what is next.

## Conclusion

An OTD is one part of the journey of our lifelong love of learning, which we strongly believe is a process. While originally believing that this degree was an "ending" or culmination of our hard work, it really was something much more. Since awarded an OTD, we learned the importance of connections and initiating relationships. Our relationships may be with a client, colleague, student, someone you admire professionally, mentor, or friend that we see every day or once a year. We more clearly see the importance of helping others, and have the confidence and excitement to help more people. We have gained confidence in utilizing evidence-based practice and speaking up. We understand that, through our knowledge, we can make an even greater impact on our profession. We are grateful that our Chatham OTD connection brought us together to share our stories through this article. We hope that it may encourage you to reflect on your own journey, share it with others, and enjoy life after the OTD.