



Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes

Report on the CAOT Professional Issue Forum “Implementation of the *Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada in Occupational Therapy Practice*” CAOT Conference 2023

Professional Issue Forums (PIFs) are held annually at the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists' (CAOT) Conferences. PIFs address priority health and social issues, and emerging practice areas in occupational therapy. PIFs involve presentations from a panel of experts and participants are invited to contribute their perspectives. Discussions lead to strategies and recommendations for action by: CAOT, occupational therapists and stakeholders to advance occupational therapy practice, research and education.

Introduction

CAOT's Professional Issue Forum 2022 focused on the relationship-building and implementation plan of the *Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada* (COTC; ACOTRO et al., 2021). This year's PIF was co-created by a panel of occupational therapists in various roles and aimed to (1) raise awareness of resources available to occupational therapists to support the implementation of the COTC, including the Culture, Equity, and Justice domain (Domain C); (2) share initial learnings/experiences/examples of implementing the COTC; and (3) support participants in building an action plan for implementing the COTC in their own occupational therapy practice.

Panelists

Hélène Thériault is an Occupational Therapist, Certified Coach and UBC Clinical Instructor.

Margaret Collingwood is the Regional Professional Practice Consultant at the Eastern Health, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services.

Sandra Carter is the Manager of Practice, College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario.

Shaminder Dhillon is an Assistant Professor in the School of Rehabilitation Science at McMaster University.

CAOT Support staff

Christina Lamontagne is the Professional Development Manager at CAOT.

Josée Séguin is the Director of Knowledge Translation Programs at CAOT.

Panel presentation summary

What does COTC implementation look like from your perspective/position?

- Hélène Thériault first shared her perspective as a clinician in British Columbia and how the COTC have helped her to support areas of growth for learning—such as Domain C—and to have improved dialogue with people, such as better explaining to others the role of occupational therapy by utilizing the Glossary definition of occupational participation, showcasing the broader scope of occupational therapy potential in helping people initiate or sustain valued occupations within their contexts and relationships.
- Margaret (Margie) Collingwood then shared her perspective as a clinical practice leader in Newfoundland and Labrador and the journey to learn about and start implementing the COTC as

a group of occupational therapists. There was recognition of the need to start small and to build a safe space for discussion as people are at different parts of their journey and learning. She also discussed the practical considerations on how now everything needs to be updated to incorporate the new language.

- Sandra Carter shared her perspective of working in the practice program at the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO) and within the mandate to ensure safe, quality, and competent occupational therapy services in the public's interest. With the launch of the COTC, the question became how to support registrants in the application within a regulatory context; while still allowing occupational therapists to identify and develop their own learning strategies to be able to support their clients in their own contexts.
- Shaminder (Shami) Dhillon then shared her perspective as an educator and how she, along with colleagues at McMaster University, completed a mapping exercise between the COTC and the occupational therapy curriculum. She also discussed the role in supporting students to be ready to practice according to the COTC yet also preparing them for the National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination (NOTCE), which is currently based on the *Profile of Practice of Occupational Therapists in Canada* (CAOT, 2012).

How can leadership address COTC implementation from your perspective/position?

- Hélène shared how two competencies from the COTC really stood out for her: "F2. Show leadership in the workplace" and "F3. Contribute to the development of occupational therapy" (ACOTRO et al., 2021, p. 17). She shared an example of a colleague who successfully advocated for an occupational therapist to be added to a primary care team. She shared how it took her time to identify herself as a leader and hopes that new graduates will be able to embrace the role of leader earlier in their career and that preceptors will identify themselves as leaders within this role supporting the students to further develop these specific competencies in the area of leadership.
- Margie expressed her pleasure on how leadership is now explicit within the COTC and the importance of us all being leaders to advance the profession. She reflected on how the LEADS framework (Canadian College of Health Leaders, 2021) can be helpful to support the implementation of Domain C because it highlights leading self by engaging in self-awareness and self-reflection. To advance practice in Domain C, clinicians will need to be brave and vulnerable. As occupational therapists, we are often in the forefront in bringing this forward and may be discussing with team members who aren't familiar with terms such as ableism.
- Sandra shared that part of leading is helping occupational therapists to recognize that they are leaders, and to also set the example. As an occupational therapist, working for a provincial regulator, the same competencies and accountabilities apply as other occupational therapists. We are still in a transitional period where occupational therapists are in the process of learning, unlearning, and relearning. She encouraged occupational therapists to start with the easy wins, then work towards the bigger changes to implement the COTC. She highlighted the importance of trusting your professional opinion because you have expertise on how you believe the COTC can apply with your clients and within their contexts.
- Shami discussed the process that educators at McMaster University engaged in to compare the COTC to the *Profile of Practice of Occupational Therapists in Canada* (CAOT, 2012) and the *Essential Competencies of Practice for Occupational Therapists in Canada* (ACOTRO et al., 2011), and that this resource is now posted on the program website for others to consult (McMaster University, 2023). She shared how students within the program engage in reflective writing and discussions on their strengths and their areas of growth using the COTC for guidance.

What does co-creation look like from your perspective/position?

- Hélène highlighted how co-creation stood out for her within the COTC as a clinician and developed the following definition to support us: “To establish an agreement about the therapeutic relationship—from the overall engagement to each session. Create a clear process, plans and goals to achieve their needs / wants in occupational participation”. She shared how she collaboratively establishes an agreement with the client regarding the therapeutic relationship with questions such as, “What is most important for you? What are you most concerned about in the area of ____? Where would you like to be in six sessions? What would it look like? What will it feel like? What will be different? And what will be the impact if you achieve this?” and checking in on the progress regularly. She also discussed the mindset shift of always keeping in mind that the client is the expert of their situation and their context, and the role as a therapist to truly listen to them in order to co-create.
- Margie described the process of co-creating the implementation plan for the COTC as a group of practicing clinicians and linking their experience of co-creation to the competencies themselves. Through this process, they realized the importance of first understanding their strengths then their areas of growth. She shared how they have been engaging in learning as a group through resources (shared below) and critically discussing how to integrate the COTC, in particular Domain C.
- Sandra spotlighted how co-creation differs from one occupational therapist to another, yet there needs to be a concerted effort to partner with your clients. She discussed the expanded definition of clients to include individuals, groups, communities, organizations, and populations. She shared that the expectation is that occupational therapists strive to create safer and ethical spaces, to collaborate with the client, and to avoid making assumptions. The Culture, Equity and Justice resource document (COTO, 2022) was developed to support occupational therapists’ reflection and understand their relational accountability with clients.
- Shami discussed the need to critically reflect on the curriculum about partnering with clients, including concepts of client-centred practice and collaborative relationship-focused occupational therapy. She highlighted how co-creation is important to be able to address the culture, equity, and justice indicators in Domain C. She described the scaffolding process of creating opportunities for students to learn concepts, practice, and receive feedback on their communication and collaboration skills in increasingly complex client situations.

What have been your challenges?

- Hélène described her process of mapping the COTC to coaching competencies, and how the strong interlink of indicators increased her confidence of utilizing occupational therapy competencies. She shared how the adjustment to the language, such as occupational participation and occupational possibilities, has been challenging for her and how she has found the definitions in the Glossary section of the COTC helpful for her understanding. She also acknowledged how she is learning to be uncomfortable with the discomfort in Domain C and viewing it as a learning opportunity.
- Margie highlighted how she has needed to recognize as a leader that every clinician is at their own place within the journey and to facilitate safe spaces for discussion so they can learn and move forward together. She also discussed the heightened accountability of clinicians now that the COTC is in effect in NL. The COTC outlines the importance of the micro, meso, and macro contexts, however clinicians feel they don’t have sufficient time to maintain their day-to-day

responsibilities while now being more accountable to advocate for improvements at the meso level. Margie also shared the need to update all the language in forms and tools that are used.

- Sandra encouraged occupational therapists to contact practice support at the regulatory organizations to work through some challenges they are facing and to not be fearful of getting it right or wrong, as there is always opportunity to correct or change what you are doing. She shared a challenge as a regulator is to develop resources that are timely, relevant, and useful for occupational therapists, that can still apply for all occupational therapists despite the broad scope of practice. She recognized the challenges with using the updated terminology and noted this will require a shift in mindset. As the COTC are rolled out across the country at different times, for a time the new and old are co-existing.
- Shami echoed the challenges related to updating terminology throughout the curriculum. She also described the challenge of students not having the experience of witnessing how the occupational therapy profession has evolved in Canada to appreciate the COTC and all that may be involved with implementing them. She stated that it has been a helpful process to unpack the new set of competencies with the students.

What resources have been helpful?

The panelists shared the following English resources that they found helpful:

- Alberta College of Occupational Therapists. (2023, March). *Draft standards of practice*. <https://acot.ca/serving-the-public/standards-of-practice-consultation/>
- Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations. (2022, June). *2022 National eLearning Module*. Available through provincial regulatory organizations. <https://ot-elearning.skillbuilder.co/>
- Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations, Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs, & Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. (2021, December). *Competencies for occupational therapists in Canada*. <https://acotro-acore.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/OT-Competency-Documents-EN-web.pdf>
- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. (2021, October). *Equity and justice*. https://caot.ca/site/prac-res/pr/equityandjustice?language=en_CA&nav=sidebar&banner=4
- College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia. (2022, September). *Practice standard: Indigenous cultural safety, humility, and anti-racism*. https://cotbc.org/wp-content/uploads/COTBC_Standards_Sept29.pdf
- College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia. (2023, January). *Indigenous anti-racism, cultural safety & humility (IARCS&H)*. <https://cotbc.org/iarcs/>
- College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia. (2015, January). Continuing competency program: Self-assessment of essential competencies. <https://cotns.ca/assets/E-binder/COTNS-Self-Assessment-Revised-Jan-2015.pdf>
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario. (2022, March). *Culture, equity, and justice in occupational therapy practice*. https://www.coto.org/docs/default-source/culture-equity-justice/coto-culture-equity-and-justice-in-occupational-therapy-en.pdf?sfvrsn=4392a2c6_16
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario. (2023, March). *Standards of practice*. https://www.coto.org/docs/default-source/standards/coto---standards-of-practice-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=941dee4b_6
- Eastern Health. (2020, November). *Occupational therapy leadership self-assessment tool*.
- Egan, M., & Restall, G. (Eds.). (2022). *Promoting occupational participation: Collaborative relationship-focused occupational therapy*. Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists.

- Hammell, K. W. (2020). *Engagement in living: Critical perspectives on occupation, rights, and wellbeing*. Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists.
- Hammell, K. W., Laliberte Rudman, D., Zafran, H. Schmidt, J., Bunting, K. L., Bulk, L. Y., Grenier, M.-L., Désormeaux-Moreau, M., Lee, M., Jarus, T., & Mortenson, W. B. (2022). Unbecoming change agents. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 89(2), 96-102.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00084174221089708>
- McMaster University. (2023). *McMaster Occupational Therapy Program Competency Comparison Chart 2023*. <https://srs-ot.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/#tab-content-newsletters-resources>
- Reynolds, M. (2020). *Coach the person, not the problem: A guide to using reflective inquiry*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists. (2022, November). *Professional development plan and outcomes*. [https://ssot.sk.ca/assets/main/continuingcompetency/SSOT-PDPO-Form-\(New-Competencies\)-November-2022.pdf](https://ssot.sk.ca/assets/main/continuingcompetency/SSOT-PDPO-Form-(New-Competencies)-November-2022.pdf)
- Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists. (2022, November). *Self-assessment tool*. [https://ssot.sk.ca/assets/main/continuingcompetency/SSOT-Self-Assessment-Tool-\(New-Competencies\)-November-2022-Fillable.pdf](https://ssot.sk.ca/assets/main/continuingcompetency/SSOT-Self-Assessment-Tool-(New-Competencies)-November-2022-Fillable.pdf)
- TEDx Talks. (2020, March 13). How to tame your Advice Monster | Michael Bungay Stanier | TEDxUniversityofNevada [Video]. *YouTube*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kl0rmx7aa0w&t>
- Teillet, J. (2019). *The North-West is our mother: The story of Louis Riel's people, the Métis nation*. Patrick Crean Editions.

Les membres du panel ont partagé les ressources suivantes en français qu'elles ont trouvées utiles :

- Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes. (2021, octobre). *L'équité et la justice*.
https://caot.ca/site/prac-res/pr/equityandjustice?language=fr_FR&nav=sidebar&banner=4&language=en_CA
- Association canadienne des organismes de réglementation en ergothérapie. (2022, juin). *2022 National eLearning Module*. <https://ot-elearning.skillbuilder.co/>
- Association canadienne des organismes de réglementation en ergothérapie, Association canadienne des programmes universitaires en ergothérapie, et Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes. (2021, décembre). *Référentiel de compétences pour les ergothérapeutes au Canada*. <https://acotro-acore.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/OT-Competency-Document-FR-web.pdf>
- Ordre des ergothérapeutes de l'Ontario. (2022, mars). *La culture, l'équité et la justice dans l'exercice de l'ergothérapie*. https://www.coto.org/docs/default-source/culture-equity-justice/coto-culture-equity-and-justice-in-occupational-therapy-fr.pdf?sfvrsn=5e7a03a5_14
- Ordre des ergothérapeutes de l'Ontario. (2023, mars). *Normes d'exercice*.
https://www.coto.org/docs/default-source/standards/coto-normes-d-exercice-2023.pdf?sfvrsn=874f6be_8
- Egan, M., et Restall, G. (Réd.). (2022). *L'ergothérapie axée sur les relations collaboratives pour promouvoir la participation occupationnelle*. Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes.
- Hammell, K. W., Laliberte Rudman, D., Zafran, H. Schmidt, J., Bunting, K. L., Bulk, L. Y., Grenier, M.-L., Désormeaux-Moreau, M., Lee, M., Jarus, T., & Mortenson, W. B. (2022). Dédevenir des agents de changement. *Revue canadienne de l'ergothérapie*, 89(2), 96-102.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/00084174221089708>

Roundtable discussion summary

1- What have been your 'aha' moments from this PIF?

Following the panel presentation, participants discussed in groups their 'aha' moments from this PIF as well as the steps they planned on taking after this PIF. Some participants appreciated learning that there are several resources already available to assist with implementation of the COTC. Other participants expressed that it was validating to recognize some steps that they have already taken and that it is a process that will take time. A few participants also shared the role of being leaders even if not in formal leadership positions and the importance of recognizing our privilege and that we may be at a different place in this journey than others.

2- What steps will you take after this PIF?

Several participants expressed that their next step will be to review the available resources, including to read through to COTC again now that they have increased knowledge of the terminology. Others plan on continuing self-reflection and identifying concrete goals to take steps towards implementing the COTC, such as comparing the old and the new competency documents and focusing on practicing two new competencies at a time.

Conclusion

Integrating the COTC into occupational therapy practice across Canada is a process that takes time and looks different from one occupational therapist to another. Ongoing self-reflection, conscious efforts to co-create with clients and colleagues, and being a leader in implementing Domain C on Culture, Equity, and Justice will help our profession move forward.

References

- Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations. (2011). *Essential competencies of practice for occupational therapists in Canada, 3rd edition*. https://acotro-acore.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ACOTRO_EC_3rd_ed.pdf
- Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations, Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs, & Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. (2021, December). *Competencies for occupational therapists in Canada*. <https://acotro-acore.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/OT-Competency-Document-EN-web.pdf>
- Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. (2012). *Profile of practice of occupational therapists in Canada*. <https://caot.ca/document/3653/2012otprofile.pdf>
- Canadian College of Health Leaders. (2021, November 10). *The LEADS framework*. <https://cchl-ccls.ca/pld-leads/the-leads-framework/>
- College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario. (2022, March). *Culture, equity, and justice in occupational therapy practice*. https://www.coto.org/docs/default-source/culture-equity-justice/coto-culture-equity-and-justice-in-occupational-therapy-en.pdf?sfvrsn=4392a2c6_16
- McMaster University. (2023). *McMaster Occupational Therapy Program Competency Comparison Chart 2023*. <https://srs-ot.healthsci.mcmaster.ca/#tab-content-newsletters-resources>