

Position Statement INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONALISM

Introductory statement of the purpose of the paper

The purpose of this paper is to alert members of the international occupational therapy profession of their responsibility to codes of conduct and professionalism when operating in the global marketplace.

The issues surrounding international professionalism are best reviewed in relation to the opportunities afforded occupational therapists through globalisation and the opening up of markets to profit from providing educational experiences and knowledge transfer.

Statement of the position being taken

The members of the WFOT and national member organisations need to conform to the principles of ethical and transparent transactions in the global market place just as they would in their home country. Both parties in contracted services need to be aware of the global differences in experiences relating to developing, understanding and signing contracts to receive or provide a service(s) in any jurisdiction and specifically out of country.

International events require greater care that the language used leads to a common understanding of the deliverables and the performance expectations of both parties including cultural sensitivities to the communication form and personal deportment in delivery and dress.

WFOT expects that both parties will operate in good faith through clear statements of goals, deliverables and associated costs but also do their due diligence before finalising any signed agreement.

Statement of the significance of position or issue to occupational therapy

There is a tremendous potential for occupational therapists' growth in providing continuing professional development experiences as efforts are made to increase the global profession's competency base in a variety of areas core to practice and seen as professional extensions. Many therapists live in regions of the world where salaries are inadequate to travel to international conferences. These occupational therapists also hunger for the knowledge and skills to improve their practice and their opportunity for career advancements within health and social sectors. In arranging a collective experience, the occupational therapy organisers may make assumptions about the preparation and performance of potentially visiting experts (face to face or on line) and "parachuting" experts may not factor into their delivery, local contexts, habits and traditions. These circumstances may result in not only dissatisfaction on the part of both parties but also a feeling of misrepresentation of the product and a negative attribution to other occupational therapists from abroad by the organizing group.

Statement of the significance of the position to society

Involvement of occupational therapists publicly offering global professional development experiences raises the awareness of the profession's quality contribution to health and social performance issues. Developing more sophisticated occupational therapy promoters and consumers of these events will ultimately increase society's acceptance of the professionalism and therefore the quality of services offered by occupational therapists.

Substantiating rationale for the position

There is no other standard than ethical practice in all areas of occupational therapy. The business model associated with the provision of occupational therapy services is not well understood in many countries as many therapists have only worked as health systems employees and never had to negotiate an individual contract. This includes identifying the price of services offered intra-professionally, what is included and knowing that a Not for Profit Agency can make a surplus. Knowledge and clear communication is the best deterrent to misinterpretation.

Challenges and strategies

- Dissemination
Member organisations need to promote simple business skill resources within its members and in particularly within its leadership
- Education
Education on costing services and negotiating agreements should be part of the administration and delivery systems content in entry level programs
- Research
Member associations and individual occupational therapists must be encouraged to carry out research regarding the most effective models for a variety of jurisdictions in promoting and offering professional development and other services including consumer satisfaction studies.

Conclusion

Occupational therapy professionals around the world are always responsible for operating within their codes of professional conduct and providing service with integrity including those resources provided to other professionals. International activities require greater exploration and clearer agreements on deliverables between parties.