

Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association gains associate member status in the World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

In March 2012 at the Council Meeting of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) in Taiwan the Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association (TTOTA) was unanimously approved to be admitted as an associate member. This was a major accomplishment for TTOTA after only eight years in existence. The WFOT's mission is to promote occupational therapy as an art and science internationally. The Federation supports the development, use and practice of occupational therapy worldwide, demonstrating its relevance and contribution to society. It does this by representing 73 member organizations worldwide and over 350,000 international occupational therapists. Specifically relevant to Trinidad and Tobago, WFOT promotes the entry-level practice competencies to assist in the development and promotion of a standard of excellence in occupational therapy practice, and to assist and to guide the development and monitoring of occupational therapy practice competencies within WFOT member countries.

Both TTOTA and WFOT share humble beginnings. The Federation was founded in 1952 with seven member associations. TTOTA was founded in 2004 with four occupational therapy practitioners. From small beginnings come good things. Over the intervening nine years TTOTA has grown from strength to strength continuing a history of professional activism, innovation in practice and commitment to excellence in the promotion of occupational therapy.

In 2005 we hosted the first seminar on environmental accessibility, back when that concept was barely heard of in this country. In 2007 we hosted the then-largest Biennial Scientific Conference of the Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapists. Since 2005 TTOTA has had a representative at every Biennial Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapist (ACOT) conference. In 2010 two TTOTA members, Camilla Cox and I, represented the Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapists (ACOT) at the WFOT Council meeting in Santiago, Chile. It was there that ACOT won the bid to host the Interim Executive Management Meeting which took place in Trinidad and Tobago in May 2011.

Coming out of this close working relationship with the WFOT, the members of TTOTA understood more clearly the advantages, technical and strategic, that could be had from associate membership and so membership application was made. It is hoped that this new link with the WFOT will benefit both Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean as we look forward to continued support of our pursuit of tertiary-level occupational therapy education being developed in Trinidad and Tobago. Commitment to this endeavor has been shown from the University of the Southern Caribbean and preliminary activities are underway. This can only bode well for the profession of occupational therapy and by extension for the quality of life enjoyed by those who use the services of occupational therapists.

TTOTA owes a debt of gratitude to the many occupational therapists, both local and international, for their contributions over the years that has led us to where we are today. We also thank our ACOT colleagues, friendly occupational therapy faculty around the world, friends of TTOTA and Team HOPE, and occupational therapy students and volunteers who have supported the mission and growth of the association over the years.

Lesley Garcia
TTOTA Delegate to the WFOT
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