

Report: ACOT Participation 29th WFOT Council Meeting and 15th World Congress
Santiago, Chile, April 25th – May 7th 2010

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prepared by

Camilla Cox – ACOT WFOT Delegate
Lesley Garcia – ACOT Substitute First Alternate

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29th WFOT Council Meeting Delegate Group
Universidad Andres Bello

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INTRODUCTION

The 29th WFOT Council Meeting followed by the 15th International Congress of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists was held in Santiago, Chile in April 2010. It was with great pleasure that Camilla Cox, WFOT ACOT Delegate, and Lesley Garcia, Substitute 1st Alternate, attended both events. It was the first time that the Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapists was represented as a contributing member at the Council Meeting.

The five-day Council Meeting (26th April - 30th April) and preceding Focus Day (25th April) were dedicated to the business side of the WFOT while the World Congress was an exciting, and inspiring four days of professional presentations, posters, workshops and individual connections and networking.

Focus Day (25th April) was a day-long workshop aimed at uncovering the main issues of importance to WFOT member country by region. It was found that issues such as therapist shortages and subsequent migration and recruitment, the shift from the medical model to the social model and relevance of curricula in preparing therapists to function given these forces was of concern to all around the world.

European Member Countries



Asian Member Countries

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African Member Countries



Member Countries of the Americas

Summary of important outcomes at the Council Meeting:

1. The next Council Meeting 2012 will be held in Taiwan in lieu of India as previously anticipated.
2. The Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapists won the bid to host the next Interim Executive Management Meeting in 2011.
3. The WFOT is now legally registered as a non-profit entity in Switzerland and therefore now abides by the Swiss Code. The new articles of incorporation of WFOT were presented to the members for them to take back to their countries to review and vote upon. Delegates of the members countries voted its approval in principle.
4. The winner of the Thelma Cardwell Foundation Award was Lyle Duque, the delegate from the Philippines.
5. In the prestigious category of Honorary Fellow the individual selected was Rosemary Crouch of South Africa.
6. The Seychelles is newly admitted as a WFOT member country.
7. Kunming Medical College, Yunnan Province, China has been approved for WFOT accreditation on the provision that it meets the minimum standards in due course.

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8. The results of the election: Vice President: Anne Carswell, Vice President Finance: Samantha Shann, Executive Director: Marilyn Pattison.



The current Executive Management Team and Programme Directors. (from L to R) Alfred Rambakumba, Suchada Sakornsatian, Anne Carswell, Marilyn Pattison, Sharon Brintnell, Samantha Shann, Richard Ledger, Nils Erik Ness

This is the group that will make up the participants at the Interim Executive Management Meeting.

The WFOT works relentlessly to improve world standards in Occupational Therapy practice and education. In relation to education, Occupational Therapy is the only Allied Health Profession with a World Federation which accredits education programs and practice standards at a global level. In further support of this, the WFOT aims to review and update where necessary the current Minimum Standards by 2012. Additionally, work was done to fine tune important documents, position statements and information packages.

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PROGRAMME AREAS

One of the way the WFOT accomplishes all this work is through the Programme areas led by the Programme Directors. The programmes are as follows:

1. International Cooperation - Shuchada Sakornsatian (Thailand)
2. Education and Research Alfred Ramukumba (South Africa)
3. Promotional Development – Richard Ledgerd (UK)
4. Quality and Standards - Nils Erik Ness (Netherlands)

Each programme takes on a number of projects per council period that completes the work of the WFOT. All WFOT delegates (and indeed all occupational therapists) are invited and encouraged to join at least one of these programmes and so take part in the development of the profession.

Camilla joined the Promotion and Development programme. Her group's project aims to 1. compile useful documents and ideas into a comprehensive package to support OT's in organising OT promotion events and 2. to research, design, implement and maintain a social network forum to increase communication and accessibility to information for OT and interested parties around the globe.

Lesley joined the Education and Research programme and is part of the group working on “The Plan to Revise the Minimum Standards”. She is the lead on the research project looking at “The Migration Patterns of Occupational Therapists worldwide”.



Education and Research Programme Committee at work

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WFOT for the last 50 years has worked in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations in setting standards and improving access and level of health care available to those around the globe. In particular in the last 4 years the collaboration between the WHO and the WFOT has been working on a number of projects including building capacity among health rehabilitation policy makers and service providers. Promoting Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR), supporting the production, dissemination and use of the World Report on Disability and Rehabilitation (2009) are just some examples.

Of particular interest was the available data from the Human Resources Data project, a major research project carried out by Richard Ledgerd which shows world statistics of the demographics of occupational therapists, education programs and practice areas around the globe. This data is particularly useful in backing arguments for service and education development. This project was seen as worth continuing and developing.



All the male WFOT Delegates at Council reflecting the gender imbalance in the profession.

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Last day of the Council Meeting was held at the University of Andres Bello – Faculty of Medicine

The most significant impact for the ACOT Delegates attending the Council Meeting was the realization of the scope of work of the WFOT and an improved understanding of the relevance to the federation to the global development of Occupational Therapy. Additionally, it highlighted the importance of and potential for national associations of Caribbean countries to become WFOT associate members therefore allowing their member occupational therapists to become individual members of WFOT.



ACOT Delegates Camilla Cox and Lesley Garcia distribute tokens and information flyers on ACOT on the first day. First three days were held in a historic part of the Universidad (without central heating).

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Participation at the Council Meeting in person by ACOT delegates led to not only tangible results such as winning the bid to host the IEMM (2011) but also a greater understanding of the workings of the WFOT, and to establishing connections and relationships with leaders in the global occupational therapy world. This we know can only help our own region to develop and we in turn will be able to contribute to the development of occupational therapy worldwide.

15th WORLD CONGRESS (5th - 7th May 2010)



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OVERVIEW

Dr. Manfred Max-Neef, a man of vision, an economist and thought leader in sustainability and “wise man” of our era, set the tone in his keynote address at the congress opening. He reminded us of some of the inequities of globalization and the need to work with communities to improve human and equal rights. One of his questions: do we really need 300 different brands of shampoo on our shelves? suggests where global priorities lie in the modern world and his presentation, although did not directly mention occupational therapy, needed no explanation as to how this relates to the work of occupational therapist around the globe.



His stated that development does not necessarily mean bigger. His speech begged the question of critical thinking in our everyday lives and work. He made it clear that politics touches everyone every day. At the 15th International Congress themed “Sharing the Word of Occupation from Latin America”, these themes reoccurred throughout the congress in presentations and at key addresses. The message from Latin America was that Occupational Therapy has important sociopolitical roles to play in the diverse communities that we serve in addition to the more tradition roles we have been comfortable with as a profession.

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There was a focus on the need for occupational therapists to work with communities affected by occupational deprivation, involving clients in service development, and improving and increasing research to document the growing work of occupational therapists around the globe. The diversity of subjects from how best to choose an assessment when working with the elderly to the growing trend of education programmes developing a professional political consciousness in their students.



Camilla and Lesley with Sharon Brintnell and Paloma a Chilean OT student volunteer

The congress was filled with a strong Chilean flavour. The Chilean teachers, therapists and students alike were all passionate about the role and future of the profession. Despite challenging economic and natural environments they spoke of with great eloquence and intelligence of creating knowledge and solutions to problems they faced. The Chilean organizers and our hosts for the two events made every effort to please and satisfy the delegates and ensure a comfortable and productive meeting. While Chile was still recovering from the earthquake and the organizers were operating on a modest budget what was lacking in luxe was made up for by the sheer warmth and hospitable spirit of the Chilean people we met.

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EDUCATION DAY (3rd April)

This one-day workshop was attended by Lesley and 200 other participants from educational institutions around the world. Break out groups discussed themes aimed at assessing if and how well were educational programmes preparing graduates to bridge the gap between theory and practice in current contexts. Over the course of the Council Meeting and the Congress several important and potentially useful contacts were made with both heads of institution and leading thinkers in occupational therapy education interested in assisting in the development of an occupational therapy course in the Caribbean.



Making a connection with South African occupational therapist Madeline Duncan who donated her book on service learning for the development of OT in the Caribbean.

CONCLUSION

For each participant at this Congress the experience may be likened to the blind man discovering the elephant. Such was the diversity and richness of offerings. But greater than that, the enthusiasm and the sense of community that was generated over the four days was a wonderful recharger of one's professional batteries. It reminded us that we are not alone in our challenges and battles but that we can and do persevere.

The Latin American atmosphere with dancing, music, singing that was a part of all social events made it a vibrant and lively Congress. It was also the first bi-lingual congress held by the WFOT which is a landmark in demonstrating its development as an international organization.

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The congress ended by handing over to the Japanese Association of Occupational Therapists who will host the 16th World Congress of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists in 2014. We are extremely excited at the prospect of both another ACOT delegation and a larger Caribbean presence at that event! We look forward to seeing you there.



Camilla and Lesley with the two delegates from Japan

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Please use the WFOT website for access to further information, useful documents, links with other occupational therapists around the globe, important research, post congress report and developments in practice and education.

www.wfot.org

Caribbean Delegate: Camilla Cox
Caribbeandegate.acot@gmail.com

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Lesley Garcia would like to acknowledge ACOT, TTOTA and the Trinidad Working Group at the International Center on Disability and Research at University of Toronto and Professor Deb Cameron for providing financial and room sharing assistance for her to attend both events.

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