

# AJOT Celebrates AOTA's Centennial

Lorie Gage Richards

Each issue of the 2017 volume of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* will feature a special Centennial Topics section containing two to four articles related to a specific theme. The goal is to acknowledge occupational therapy's history while focusing on the future of the profession. The Centennial Topics section is intended to help occupational therapy professionals in all aspects of the profession take stock of how far the profession has come and to spark interest in the many exciting paths for the future development of the field.

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To help the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) and the occupational therapy profession celebrate the profession's centennial, each issue of the 2017 volume of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* (AJOT) will feature a special Centennial Topics section. Each section will contain two to four articles related to a specific theme. The Editorial Board selected the themes with the goal of briefly acknowledging occupational therapy's history while focusing on where the profession may go in the future. Specifically, the articles will discuss where practice and research are emerging or reemerging and where they are likely to grow in the next decade.

## Centennial Topics

With only six issues per AJOT volume, room was not available for many good topics; the final topics were those that the AJOT Associate Editors suggested most frequently. In this first issue, the Centennial Topics section focuses on the history of occupational therapy and general topics regarding the profession's future that fall across different types of practice.

The focus of the Centennial Topics section in Issue 2 (March/April) is occupational therapy practice with people with cancer. Although an occupational therapy presence in health care for cancer is not new, recognition of long-term disability from cancer treatment has increased, as has

the understanding of occupational needs during treatment (Bedard, Verma, Collins, Song, & Paquet, 2016; Morean, O'Dwyer, & Cherney, 2015). Opportunities exist for an enhanced occupational therapy presence in this area of health care.

The Centennial Topics section in Issue 3 (May/June), will focus on youth-to-adult transition. Services for youth who are aging out of youth services have been sparse. Even when such services are available, they have seldom included occupational therapy. Increasingly, we have observed occupational therapy practitioners included on transition teams in educational systems. In addition, there is room for occupational therapy to help youth learn independent living skills and employment skills as well as to be involved in other services for young adults.

Community health and wellness is the focus of the Issue 4 (July/August), Centennial Topics section. Because health care reform is demanding that health outcomes be measured distally, at the level of chronic condition management and participation, the need for occupational therapy is increasing. The best place to help people develop the healthy habits for condition management and skills needed for participation is likely to be the contexts in which those activities take place, so it is likely that occupational therapy practitioners will be increasingly involved in community health and wellness programming (AOTA, 2015).

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In Issue 5 (September/October), the Centennial Topics section will highlight research related to occupational therapy practice in mental health. Mental health was once a primary area of practice for the profession, but by the 1990s, the number of mental health jobs for occupational therapy practitioners had significantly decreased. Although all areas of practice involve mental health considerations, the reduction in employment opportunities in facilities whose primary function is to provide mental health services has led to a paucity of practitioners who have expertise in this area and to a dearth of research focused on occupational therapy's unique contributions to mental health services. The profession is experiencing renewed efforts to reenter this area of practice, and the amount of occupational therapy-related mental health research is increasing. It is likely that occupational therapy will reemerge as a major partner in health care for people with mental health issues.

Finally, in recognition that *AJOT* serves the occupational therapy profession worldwide, the Issue 6 (November/December)

Centennial Topics section will highlight occupational therapy internationally. Just as contextual factors determine how people are affected by their health conditions, the contextual factors of culture, national and local governments, and the economy affect what occupational therapy looks like in different parts of the world. Yet, occupational therapy, regardless of its location, must be based on validated treatment and enablement theories and on evidence of intervention effectiveness.

## Conclusion

The Centennial Topics section is intended to help occupational therapy professionals in all aspects of the profession—research, practice, and academia—take stock of how far the profession has come and spark interest in the many exciting paths for the future development of the field. Over the coming year, *AJOT* will continue to publish high-quality original research and special issues on critical topics in occupational therapy in collaboration with AOTA's Evidence-Based Practice project. Researchers in other

disciplines with occupational therapy-related manuscripts are encouraged to submit to the journal. ▲

## References

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