

Launch of the National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers

Peggy Curran, *The Gazette* February 27, 2009

Having a stroke was dreadful. Losing his driver's licence was unthinkable.

Without that grey Buick Century with automatic everything, my father couldn't get to church or the cottage or take my non-driving mother for groceries. Suddenly, there would be no more trips to the rink and no breakfasts with his pals from the old-timers team. The car had been his ticket to ride, his freedom, in a small way, an extension of his manhood.

So when the doctor ordered him to give up driving, he launched a counter-offensive, visiting optometrists and memorizing eye charts until he was able pass the test and get back his licence.

Luckily, nothing bad happened. Still, it was not the ideal solution – not for the stubborn driver or his skittish passengers or the unsuspecting motorists in the oncoming lane.

Over the last 20 years, Nicol Korner-Bitensky, an occupational therapist and professor at McGill University, has watched versions of this story play out again and again as older clients battle new disabilities while struggling to stay, safely, behind the wheel.

"As occupational therapists, we're supposed to be helping improve lives," she said. "Well, taking away a person's driver's licence is not a better way of

life."

Korner-Bitensky is the lead researcher for a national campaign launched in mid-February 2009 aimed at promoting



Driver Mrs. Pennie shakes hands with Dr. Nicol Korner-Bitensky, Ph.D., OT(C), erg., principal investigator for the National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers at McGill University. Dr. Korner-Bitensky is working in concert with CAOT.

mobility and reducing injuries among older drivers. Funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada, the National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers will meet with health care professionals, insurance providers, driving instructors, police officers and seniors themselves.

Together, they'll look for

ways to reduce the risks when older people take to the road, and ease withdrawal pangs when they finally decide to hang up their keys.

accidents are the leading cause of accidental death for people age 65 to 75, and people 75 or older are more than three times as likely to be involved in a car crash as drivers age 35 to 44.

Eventually, Korner-Bitensky hopes to see an innovative program that combines public awareness with standardized drivers' education refresher courses and visualization exercises – measures that she believes could do as much for road safety as promoting seat belt use and clamping down on drunk driving.

During preliminary studies leading up to the launch, researchers were struck by the willingness of Canadian seniors to share ideas and learn new things.

"What we heard from across the country was 'Sign me up,'" said Korner-Bitensky, who is working in concert with the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT).

"From Fredericton to Sarnia, Montreal to Victoria, people told us that driving is important to them, but also to their families and neighbours who rely on them, for shopping and doctors appointments, delivering Meals on Wheels or other volunteer work. It's their lifeline."

To see the national Blueprint, please visit the website at: www.mcgill.ca/spot/ot/driving or www.caot.ca/driving.

The study couldn't be more timely. People age 65 or over may not be the fastest drivers on the road, but they are the fastest-growing segment of the driving population – and by 2040, there will be twice as many old people on our roads.

But there has also been a steady increase in the number of accidents involving seniors. Car

ACOTUP

NEWSLETTER – Spring/Summer 2009

ACOTUP/ACPUE is a national organization that promotes and develops occupational therapy education and research with an understanding of issues in a global context.



Dalhousie's strategic plan

Liz Townsend, professor and director

The strategic plan for Dalhousie's school of occupational therapy has been refreshed to energize faculty and staff to make this the best place possible to work, the best environment for students to study, and the best school of occupational therapy for alumni to remember.

The plan re-asserts the school's commitment to excellence, collaboration, balance and justice as values underlying initiatives to advance occupational therapy and occupational science scholarship and the school's range of educational programs and approaches. Key changes are a greater emphasis on multi-sectoral partnerships that are mutually beneficial, and an explicit commitment to becoming more financially robust and extending management and leadership capacity.

A flyer and the full strategic plan is available at http://occupationaltherapy.dal.ca/Resources/School_Governance.php.

Video promotes OT program

As Chair of McGill University's marketing committee Caroline Storr, along with colleague Laurie Snider, saw the need for an occupational therapy recruitment video to promote the occupational therapy program and the OT profession at McGill. It is intended that the video will also be used by CAOT and the Quebec Ministry of Health to promote the OT profession.

After funding for the video was in place from McGill's faculty of medicine, it took about one year, from start to finish, to create, including developing questions, collecting interviews, editing, and production.

Sincere appreciation and credit are extended to Frank Roop from McGill's ICS services, as he played an instrumental role in helping Storr create the final product, although Storr says, "this video would not have been possible without the many participants who freely gave their time."

"It was a great experience trying to capture my vision of OT onto film," Storr says.

The video can be found at www.mcgill.ca/spot/ot.

McGill University clinical education news

With Susanne Mak now on maternity leave following the birth of her first child, Aurelie, we were very fortunate to recruit Lucie Bouvrette to our team as of January 2009. She can be reached at lucie.bouvrette@mcgill.ca and is responsible for all out of province student placements.

We are in the midst of transition to our new master's professional program so this year we are running the last year of our bachelor's professional program, the qualifying year of our fast-track master's with a small cohort, the first year of our new U2 program and the second run of our new U1 program simultaneously.

There has definitely been lots of excitement. We expect to have 75 students in each clinical course when we are at full capacity in 2011. We do have two summer clinical courses out of four courses in total which are proving to be a challenge in

terms of recruitment of sufficient learning opportunities.

We have reviewed our awards to recognize clinicians and we offer long-term service awards, professional associate awards (four students or more per calendar year), will have our first spa day contest and continue to make site payments to support continuing education for our clinical educators.

We continue to offer both online and face-to-face clinical education workshops. Caroline Storr is part of a team developing inter-professional time-release modules with a discussion board interactive component and we are also developing a fifth special topics module. We are trying to find funding to translate UBC e-tips into French for our Quebec clinicians.

Finally, at McGill we are developing our accreditation materials for a January 2010 submission and have produced a video (see sidebar story).

2008/2009 president's report

Jean-Pascal Beaudoin, president, ACOTUP/ACPUE

The ACOTUP/ACPUE June business meeting was history in the making for the association. With a few minor revisions, the members approved the revised by-laws to represent the new governance model voted in at the last teleconference call held in February 2009.

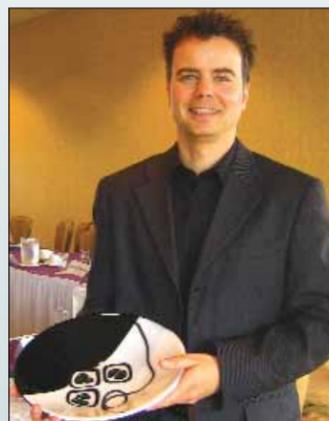
This new way of governing hopefully will result in a more streamlined and efficient way of doing business – and will lead to the development of initiatives to promote education and research in occupational therapy.

Much thanks needs to be given to the governance committee, and the by-law task force with the assistance of Jane Helleur & Associates Inc. as all of those involved worked extremely hard to get this done. Now the association can move closer to becoming incorporated which will become the first task of the new council.

At the meeting in Ottawa, a brainstorming session was held on future directions ACOTUP should pursue and a summary is included in the meeting's minutes. Afterwards, the new ACOTUP executive was elected. I am pleased to report the following nominations: Donna Collins as president, Tal Jarus as vice-president and Sandra Everitt as secretary/treasurer. Together they will bring the new ACOTUP forward!

The curriculum and CUFE committees also met once again this year to share and develop ideas. The CUFE committee focused on increasing student readiness for situated fieldwork

learning. NFPS representative Meghan Howard and NFPS coordinator Anita Law gave a presentation to bring CUFE members up to speed on some of the



On the left: Jean-Pascal Beaudoin displays the original fused glass art bowl presented to him as a thank you gift for his two years of service as president of ACOTUP / ACPUE.



Below: A historical moment captured at the last ACOTUP annual general meeting in Ottawa, before the new governance model, approved at the AGM, is implemented.

successes and challenges of the year before. You can read more about upcoming changes to the service in this issue of the newsletter. I believe I speak for all when I say the discussion at the CUFE meeting was productive and appreciated.

The curriculum meeting focused on ways the various faculties are incorporating the OT profile into curricula and the challenges they are facing in doing so. That meeting also included

discussions on the various texts used in curricula and new teaching platforms used for Generation X and Y students.

Under the new governance

model these two face-to-face meetings – which are dear to my colleagues hearts – will now function as part of a new education committee with council guidance. A thank you goes out to Caroline Storr, Margaret Anne Campbell-Rempel, Susan Mulholland and Jocelyn Brown who stepped forward to act as representatives on the education committee.

In addition to its regularly scheduled meetings, this year

ACOTUP was proud to host a day-long leadership forum on primary health care. Five ACOTUP members represented the association and shared views and ideas to further develop the profession with representatives from ACOTRO, CAOT, COTF and PAC. Dr. Mary Ann McColl gave a presentation that included opportunities for occupational therapists to work in primary health care.

The participants discussed the challenges and opportunities for OTs in primary health care, including funding, language, education, culture and scope of practice, to name a few. Everyone involved seemed very keen in continuing the discussion on the role of OTs in primary health care. Excellent feedback was given among participants and the session was both positive and constructive.

As I leave my role as president, I would like to say the past two years have been very rewarding. A highlight was working together to approve the new governance model and the by-laws as identified in the ACOTUP 2007-09 strategic plan. I remain committed to working with other members as the association transitions toward a bright future. I would like to thank all those involved in representing ACOTUP on the different task forces and external committees. Members' involvement is essential to meet the association's strategic goals. I especially would like to thank Rose Martini for her work and support and Megram Consulting Services for its professional care.



Join Occupational Therapists from across the globe at these upcoming events or explore their websites:

Surfers Paradise QLD, Australia
10th Annual International Mental Health Conference
August 12-14, 2009 | www.anzmb.asn.au/Conference9/

Johannesburg, South Africa
4th Biennial SANRA Conference
August 26-28, 2009 | www.sanra.org

London, England
2nd Manual Handling for OTs: The Balancing Act
September 21-22, 2009 | www.cot.co.uk/public/events/intro/intro.php

Dramatic increase in student applications at NFPS

The National Fieldwork Placement Service (NFPS) continues to perfect its procedures to ensure OT students applying to the service receive exciting and challenging learning opportunities outside of their university catchment area. It has been a busy academic year for NFPS with the number of applications being received increasing by over 30 per cent from last year.

With this dramatic increase in demand, it quickly became apparent that the system needed some adjusting to accommodate the larger number of students wanting to use the service.

NFPS now has five fully-trained employees each comfortable with policies and procedures – and all are capable of placing students across Canada. Anita Law has come onboard as the NFPS coordinator and she oversees all the placements, tracks numbers and maintains the critical site lists and the website.

NFPS is always working closely with the fieldwork coordinators at each of the participating universities to

increase and update the number of sites NFPS can contact on behalf of student applicants. The short and long-term goal is to see the percentage of successful placements match the increase in demand.

NFPS is also committed to establishing strong working relationships with many of the sites that have consistently provided quality placements and been so accommodating to the service's demands. As such, the service has had some success in increasing the number of successful placement numbers despite the increased request volume.

Frequent questions from both students and universities has clearly identified the need for better clarity and improved communication, and as such the NFPS website (www.nfps.ca) is being completely updated. The goal is to provide a one-stop-shop for information for Canadian and International students as well as universities and sites.

The website will clearly show the application process, policies, statistics on placements

for various geographic locations, the number of sites available in each geographic area and will feature an extensive frequently asked questions section. For university use only, a password protected section of the site will be developed to allow for easier and more productive sharing of information.

For students interested in travel, broadening their horizons or simply need to head home for a few weeks to save on expenses, NFPS is dedicated to serving you.

NFPS also encourages those with adventurous spirits to con-

sider placements in less populated parts of the country where great communities and placement opportunities await. As always, students and universities should remain aware that the demand for placements in urban centres like the GTA, Ottawa, Vancouver and Victoria means lower odds for students hoping to go to those cities for out-of-catchment placements.

With a renewed focus on communication and clarity, the placement staff at NFPS are looking forward to a new academic year and striving to successfully matching applicants.

