

A SALUTE TO JOCK MURRAY – COLLOQUIUM 15TH TO 16TH MAY 2008-06-22

**SIX DECADES OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN SOUTH AFRICA
SOUTH AFRICA'S CONTRIBUTION TO OTARG (The Occupational Therapy
Africa regional Group) 1995 - 2008-06-22**

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It is a wonderful experience to be invited by you Jock, to this gathering of friends and colleagues to honour the many years you have put into the profession of occupational therapy. You and I have had many wonderful discussions when I have been down here to examine students and many discussions about our passions, the NGOs. I have spent many happy times in your home.

Since you chose to use the analogy of the elephant, I had many discussions with family and friends about what it meant. If you are comparing elephants and OTs you are certainly the most famous elephants in the profession!

I have been asked to speak about the role of South African occupational therapists in the development of occupational therapy in the Sub-Saharan continent of Africa. They have been very involved and so have I, at both a WFOT and local level. I think the following account will bear evidence to this.

The World Federation of Occupational Therapy (WFOT) has encouraged the development of regional groups in the demarcated WHO areas of the world. To date there is COTEC (Western Europe), the Asia-Pacific Group, South America and the Occupational Therapy Africa Regional Group (OTARG).

The concept of starting the group was conceived in 1995 but did not get off the ground. In 1996 the idea was again revived at the WFOT Council Meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. Delegates from Tanzania attended the meeting as observers to help promote the idea and the task was given to me, delegate from OTASA, South Africa, to convene the first meeting in South Africa later in the year.

The objectives of WFOT in developing this regional group were to:

- develop the services of occupational therapy in sub-Saharan Africa.
- encourage membership of African countries with WFOT.
- support the existing occupational therapy training centres in Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe and South Africa and assist in the emerging training in Tanzania and Mauritius.
- promote the development of training in more countries in Africa and keep the standards of occupational therapy training in line with the WFOT Minimum Standards of Training

10,000 US\$ was provided by WFOT for delegates from 9 countries to convene in Durban in August 1996, and at the same time to attend the OTASA National Congress.

Founder member country representatives



Delegates from Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe attended the inaugural meeting of OTARG.

In the picture above you can see Jeanne Pretorius and Ann Nott at the middle back (OTASA Alternate Delegates to WFOT) and me in the middle in front. (OTASA Delegate to WFOT)

Justine Nanyonjo from Uganda was elected Chairperson; Jacqueline Laurent from Mauritius was Vice Chairperson, James Botela from Kenya as secretary and me and Ann Nott from South Africa as joint treasurers. Anticipated new members of OTARG were Nigeria, Namibia, Swaziland, Seychelles, Lesotho, Mali, Ethiopia, Zambia and Malawi. It was decided at the meeting to launch an OTARG Newsletter and Judith van der Veen from Tanzania undertook this task. It was also decided to plan the first OTARG Congress in Mauritius in 1999. Jacqueline Laurent (Mauritius) and I were appointed as Congress organisers. It was also asked that delegates consider the development of a logo for OTARG.

After the meeting in Durban, the OTARG delegates were taken on a tour of the Limpopo province by Majorie Concha, previous OTASA delegate to WFOT, to visit the CBR Project at Acornhoek.

In the interim period before the first Congress, the development of the training of occupational therapists at Tumaini University at KCMC Moshi in Tanzania went ahead. In January 1997, occupational therapists involved in training, and myself now Chairperson of the WFOT Education Committee, was invited to Moshi in Tanzania by the DSE (German Foundation for International Development, promoters of education in Africa). The purpose was to develop a curriculum for occupational therapy training at

KCMC (Kilimanjaro Christian Medical College) in Moshi and to meet with the Minister of Education.

During a social evening at this event, TOTA (The Tanzanian Occupational Therapy Association) was born. It was officially agreed to by the Tanzanian Government in 2000. The training of occupational therapists in Tanzania started in October 1998 with Charles Bulinda Lirhunde from Kenya as HOD and pioneering occupational therapists in the country, namely Herma Grossman and Judith van der Veen, as lecturers. The first occupational therapists graduated in July 2001.

A visit by myself with the executive of WFOT to the Ugandan Occupational Therapy training at Mulago Hospital in Kampala, took place after the Council meeting in 1996 and the curriculum for training was discussed. The curricula for Uganda and Tanzania were both approved by the Education Committee of WFOT in Ottawa 1998 and both countries became full members of WFOT. The Kenya, South Africa and Zimbabwe curricula had long since been approved and these countries had been full members of WFOT for many years.

The first OTARG International Congress took place at Grand Bay in Mauritius in July 1999. The theme was “The 2000 challenge. OT in Africa.” It was a very colourful affair and attended by 1001 delegates from all over the world and Africa. WFOT was generous in lending “start-up” money to convene the congress and every penny was repaid afterwards! It was a great success.

The second official meeting of OTARG took place during this time and a constitution was discussed and planned. The committee was returned with the same executive for the ensuing two years leading to the second Congress in Uganda in 2001. The OTARG logo designed by Liza Davis, Rosemary Crouch’s daughter, was adopted.

WFOT decided to hold its interim Council meeting before the Congress at the same venue. One of the purposes for this was that negotiations could be made between WFOT and the Mauritius Government in terms of starting occupational therapy training on the island. Pioneer occupational therapist, Jacqueline Laurent, had established the profession in Mauritius and had been very active in promoting the training. Carolyn Webster, WFOT Chairperson, and I, now Vice President of WFOT, met with the Ministers and were interviewed on television. The training was agreed to.

In 2002 the curriculum for training occupational therapists was approved by WFOT and Mauritius became a full member of WFOT.

The training of occupational therapists at the University of Mauritius in Reduit, started in 2003. Imme Shipham from South Africa was appointed HOD and Jacqueline Laurent as one of the lecturers. The first occupational therapists graduated in 2007.

The 2nd International OTARG Congress was held in Kampala in Uganda in July 2001. The theme was “The way forward, OT in Africa.” Samantha Shann and I were the Congress Convenors. The standard of presentations had improved greatly and again it was a happy and colourful affair. Approximately 100 delegates attended from all over the world, but mostly from Africa. Students from Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa

also attended the Congress. The costs of the Congress were again fully covered and a small profit made.

At the OTARG meeting a new executive was elected. Dan Ndiga from Kenya was elected Chairman, Jacqueline Laurent from Mauritius as Vice Chairman, Daniel Kariuki from Kenya as Secretary and the Treasurer, Theresa Lorenzo from South Africa. The new constitution, developed by Samantha Shann from Uganda, was presented in a draft form for comment. It was decided that the 3rd OTARG Congress would be held in Mombasa, Kenya in August 2003.

The interim period was fairly uneventful. Namibia worked hard on the development of its training programme and negotiations were made with the Occupational Therapy Department of Pretoria University and me, Alfred Ramukumba and Enos Romanos travelled to Windhoek to assist. However the training has still not materialised.

The 3rd OTARG International Congress took place on the island of Mombasa in August 2003. The theme was “Grassroots contribution to OT in Africa.”

It was a fairly dangerous time in Mombasa as there had been a major bomb explosion near the Congress venue, a while before the congress took place. During the congress delegates were evacuated with another bomb scare. The attendance was therefore not as good as anticipated but the Congress itself was very successful. It was again a colourful affair and the delegates mingled with the leaping Masai warriors during the social events. OTARG met again and a change was made to some of the executive positions. Dan Ndiga (Kenya) was returned as Chairman, Omolade Coker (Nigeria) voted in as Vice Chairman, Rachel Kasiime (Uganda) as Secretary, Christa Meyer (Tanzania and South Africa) as Treasurer, Stefanie a Tanzanian student, as Student Representative and I took over the Newsletter.

The Constitution was approved during the meeting and the next Congress was planned for Moshi, Tanzania in 2005. Christa Meyer, who was teaching in Tanzania at the time, was appointed as Congress Convenor.

The Tanzanian occupational therapists worked hard to bring about the 4th OT ARG Congress in Moshi in August 2005. The theme of the Congress was “OT in Africa – in search for identity.”

The Congress was very well attended with more than 100 delegates from 13 countries all over the world, eager to catch a glimpse of Kilimanjaro. It reluctantly did show its beautiful head only once during the congress! The standard of papers and the evidence of good research being done, made this again a wonderful congress. The costs were again covered and many delegates set off to the nearby Serengeti and other beautiful game parks before and after the Congress. Many students again attended the Congress.

OTARG met during the Congress. The executive was re-elected with Alfred Ramukumba from South Africa as Chairman, Dani Swai from Tanzania as Vice Chairman, Rachel Kasiime-Kanyangabo from Uganda as Secretary, Christa Meyer as Treasurer, Julian Kamwesiga from Uganda as the WFOT representative, Albert Chake from Tanzania as Student Representative and myself as Newsletter Editor. The meetings were now held strictly according to the Constitution. It was decided to hold the next OTARG Congress

in Zanzibar and Mohammed Sharif was appointed convenor with help from the Tanzanian OTs.

The 5th International OTARG Congress was held on the island of Zanzibar in September 2007. The theme of the Congress was “Occupation and culture: Affirming Diversity in Occupational Therapy.” The highest number of delegates ever, attended the Congress.



There were 120 delegates from 15 countries. The scientific programme was excellent and really good research was presented. As seen above the members of the scientific programme were South African, Lana van Niekerk, Alfred Ramukumba, Jo-celene de Jongh, Lisa Wegner, Neeltjie Smit, Theresa Lorenzo and Christa Meyer (who was also the treasurer).

Jennifer Creek from the UK convened a meeting to develop an OTARG, Occupational Therapy in Africa book.

Delegates went sailing on dhows, snorkelled from the nearby islands and soaked up the tropical atmosphere.

OTARG met and Alfred Ramukumba from South Africa was returned as Chairman, Brenda Emanuel from Tanzania as Vice Chairman, Liza Wegner from South Africa as Secretary, Christa Meyer as Treasurer, Julius Kameswiga as WFOT Representative and I as newsletter Editor. A Student Representative was appointed from Tanzania. It was decided that the 6th OTARG Congress in 2009 would be held in Malawi.

In conclusion I wish to say that this involvement in Sub-Saharan Africa hasn't in any way been all about me, it really stems back to OTASA and their involvement with WFOT from being Founder members in 1953. Their support of Delegates has been the backbone of South Africa's involvement of occupational therapy on the African continent and as you can see now there are many more South African occupational therapists involved. Long may it continue.

Thank you again Jock for inviting me to this wonderful event. May you continue in your role as an important elephant in the profession of occupational therapy for many years.

Rosemary Crouch 2008