Life History of Dr. Sheri Montgomery, OTR/L, OTD
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Introduction

This life history one of 29 life history interviews that are a part of a larger project, Life Histories of Individuals Who Have Been Influential in Developing Occupational Therapy (OT) in North Dakota and Wyoming. The purpose of the project is to gather information about the history and evolution of occupational therapy (OT) practice in North Dakota and Wyoming through life histories of individual who have been influential in developing OT in these two states. It is anticipated that the life history process will be a powerful way to gather this information. This study is intended to provide current and future generations of occupational therapists a view of the history and how OT practice has evolved from its inception to current practice in North Dakota and Wyoming.

Description of Participant

Dr. Sheri Montgomery has been a practicing OT for 37 years in Wyoming, Utah, and Florida. She graduated with honors from Tuff University-Boston School of Occupational Therapy in 1980. She began practicing in Wyoming where she worked in multiple settings and became an active member in the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Association (WYOTA). She was the president of WYOTA between 1989-1993. During her time in Wyoming Dr. Montgomery received her certification in sensory integration (SI) and neuro-developmental treatment (NDT). While practicing in Wyoming, she assisted in passing the state’s OT licensure law. Dr. Montgomery decided to pursue her doctorate degree in OT and graduated from the University of Utah with her doctorate in 2013. She is currently a factually member at the University of St. Augustine Occupational Therapy Department. Dr. Sheri Montgomery is an active member in the OT profession. She holds many positions in multiple affiliations. She is currently the American Occupational Therapy Association Board of Director. She holds active memberships in Wyoming, Utah, and Florida OT associations.

Literature Review

- Between 1980-1999 there was an emphasis on establishing evidence-based research, efficacy of treatment, and defining the scope of practice.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Americans with Disabilities Act influenced the practice. (Christiansen & Haertl, 2014)
- Licensure and certifications had high importance due to the need to provide evidence of the profession. (The American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017)
- Theories and models began to support the profession and the evidence of practice. (Christiansen & Haertl, 2014)
- Coal-bed methane provided an economic boom in multiple areas of Wyoming during the 1980’s. During this time, Wyoming was also the leading state in the nation in coal production. (Roberts, 2017)

Methodology

- Qualitative research study using a life history approach
- Dr. Sheri Montgomery was one of 29 participants selected through purposive sampling
- Initial contact was made by course instructors and then participants were assigned to student researchers.
- IRB was obtained by the course instructors
- Informal consent was acquired by the student researchers
- Data was collected through a video conference interview using a pre-determined semi-structured interview schedule that was modified by student researchers.
- Type of data collected:
  - Curriculum vitae
  - Internet search
  - Interview
  - Reflective journaling
- The interview lasted 1 hour and 24 minutes. Dr. Sheri Montgomery was located in her office at St. Augustine University in St. Augustine, Florida and the student researchers were located in the Casper College Library in Casper, Wyoming.

Discussion & Conclusion

During the time Dr. Sheri Montgomery started her career as an OT, there was a need for OTs to establish evidence based research to enhance the profession. Licensure laws and certification were also being encouraged in the profession during this time. In Wyoming there was a need for OTs due to the rural setting and economic boom.

The personal and professional identity theme is an ongoing life process. Dr. Sheri Montgomery found it difficult to balance her family life and her career life. Her family became part of the OT world through participating in therapy sessions and attending conferences. While Dr. Sheri Montgomery was practicing in Wyoming, she became certified in SI and NDT. This was influenced by Wyoming’s rural setting, needs of the population, and lack of knowledge in implementing these therapies. Balancing her personal and professional life became difficult due to the demands of practicing in a rural setting. The time, money, and energy needed to enhance her career influenced the trajectory of her career and life. Thus, becoming a lifestyle for Dr. Sheri Montgomery.

References

- Retrieved from https://www.usa.edu/faculty/sheri-montgomery/