

Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of Fred Sammons, PhD (Hon), OT, FAOTA

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Introduction

This life history is one of 30 life history interviews which are part of a larger project, *Histories of Individuals Who Have Been Influential in Developing Occupational Therapy (OT) at the National Level and Beyond*.

The purpose of this study is to provide current and future generations of occupational therapists a view of the history and how occupational therapy practice has evolved from its inception to current practice through the life history stories of occupational therapists who have held leadership roles at the national level and beyond. It is anticipated that the life history process will be a powerful way to gather this information.

Literature Review

- In 1955, the AOTA published the "Policy on Advanced Study," reinforcing the idea that OTs should maintain their competencies by continuing their education (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], 2017).
- In 1967, the AOTF became a charitable and educational tax-exempt foundation (AOTA, 2017).
- In 1974, the AOTA approved a position in favor of state licensure (AOTA, 2017).
- In 1977, AOTA adopted the first stand-alone *Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics*; therapists are required to abide by the Code or be censured (AOTA, 2017).

Description of Participant

- Fred Sammons is one of the top 100 Influential People of Occupational Therapy by AOTA.
- Fred is a Korean War veteran.
- Fred earned his occupational therapy degree from Virginia Commonwealth University through the GI Bill.
- Fred became the director of occupational therapy at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago in 1957.
- In 1960, Fred began designing and building adaptive devices for clients with disabilities.
- Fred devoted all his time in creating adaptive equipment and started his business, Sammons Inc., in 1965.
- Fred's company is now called Sammons Preston, which is a multimillion dollar business.
- Fred is a member of AMBUCS, Inc, which assists children with disabilities by providing adaptive bicycles and tricycles (AmTrykes).
- Mr. Sammons is also an Honorary Life Member of AOTF.
- Fred supports research, education, and clinical programs by generously giving back through grants, scholarships, and donations.



Methodology

- This is a qualitative study using a life history approach.
- The participant was selected from a participant list compiled through purposive sampling by the project directors.
- There were no gatekeeper issues as initial contact was made by the course instructors.
- Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview and the project was approved by the UND Institutional Review Board and because of the study design the formal IRB process was waived.
- The semi-structured interview was guided by an interview schedule prepared by the project directors; the questions on the interview schedule were designed to be used with all the individuals interviewed as part of the larger project.
- Data was gathered through a video interview via ZOOM, which lasted one hour and ten-minutes.

Data Analysis

- The one hour and ten-minute interview was video, and audio recorded, transcribed and coded with 20 codes.
- From the 20 codes, four categories with themes evolved.
- The Kawa Model was foundational to the study and the data analysis (Turpin & Iwama, 2011).
- The researchers used multiple data collection sources.
- The researchers developed an audit trail throughout the analysis process to gain trustworthiness.

Findings and Discussion

Codes:

- 20 codes emerged from the interview data.
- The codes were developed based on the verbatim transcription and grouped together to create four main categories and corresponding themes.

Categories/Themes:

- **Contribution to OT**
 - Fred got a chance to use his talents to make gadgets early in his career.
 - The inventions Fred created provided choices for many clients.
 - His ability to problem-solve led to the development of many different adaptive devices.
 - Fred's business had a great impact on OT and adaptive equipment.
- **Development of OT**
 - Fred's perspective on the growth of OT education at Universities has been increasing rapidly.
 - Fred's viewpoints on the impact of medical drugs may inhibit the OT partnership with clients.
 - Fred expressed that client-centered care continues to be the standard of practice.
 - Fred believes that OT is a versatile profession, with the ability to work in many different settings.
- **Professional Journey**
 - Fred is the pioneer of creating adaptive devices for OT.
 - Fred believed he was ahead and more advanced than his competitors.
 - Fred used his skills and abilities to manufacture his inventions.
 - He received a broad education, which benefitted his career in OT.
- **Networks**
 - Fred has been and continues to be involved in many state and national associations.
 - Fred is able to contribute to many organizations because of his successful career.
 - Fred often expresses advice to current and future therapists.
 - Fred believes politics and government play a large role in impacting OT practice.

Conclusions

Assertion

- Fred developed into his role of an occupational therapist through the education he received and professional journey he encountered. His education and experiences influenced the development of his role of a businessman in inventing gadgets for the profession of occupational therapy. The impact his business has had impacts the profession globally, which leads to his connections and knowledge of networks at the international level.

Sub Assertion

- Fred had many experiences and through his abilities was able to be a pioneer of adaptive equipment for occupational therapy intervention.

Conclusion

- The interview with Fred Sammons provided significant detail and understanding of his impact on OT. His contributions of adaptive equipment will forever impact the field. Fred continues to stay active and generously give back to the profession.

Acknowledgement

The student researchers would like to thank Fred Sammons for participating in the research study and openly sharing his experiences in occupational therapy and the impact he has had within the profession.

References

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