

Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of

Dr. Donald Walkovich, DHSc, OTR/L, FAOTA

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Introduction

- This life history is one of thirty life history interviews that 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 of occupational therapy practice and how it has evolved from its inception to the current practice.
- This has been done 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.

Description of the Participant

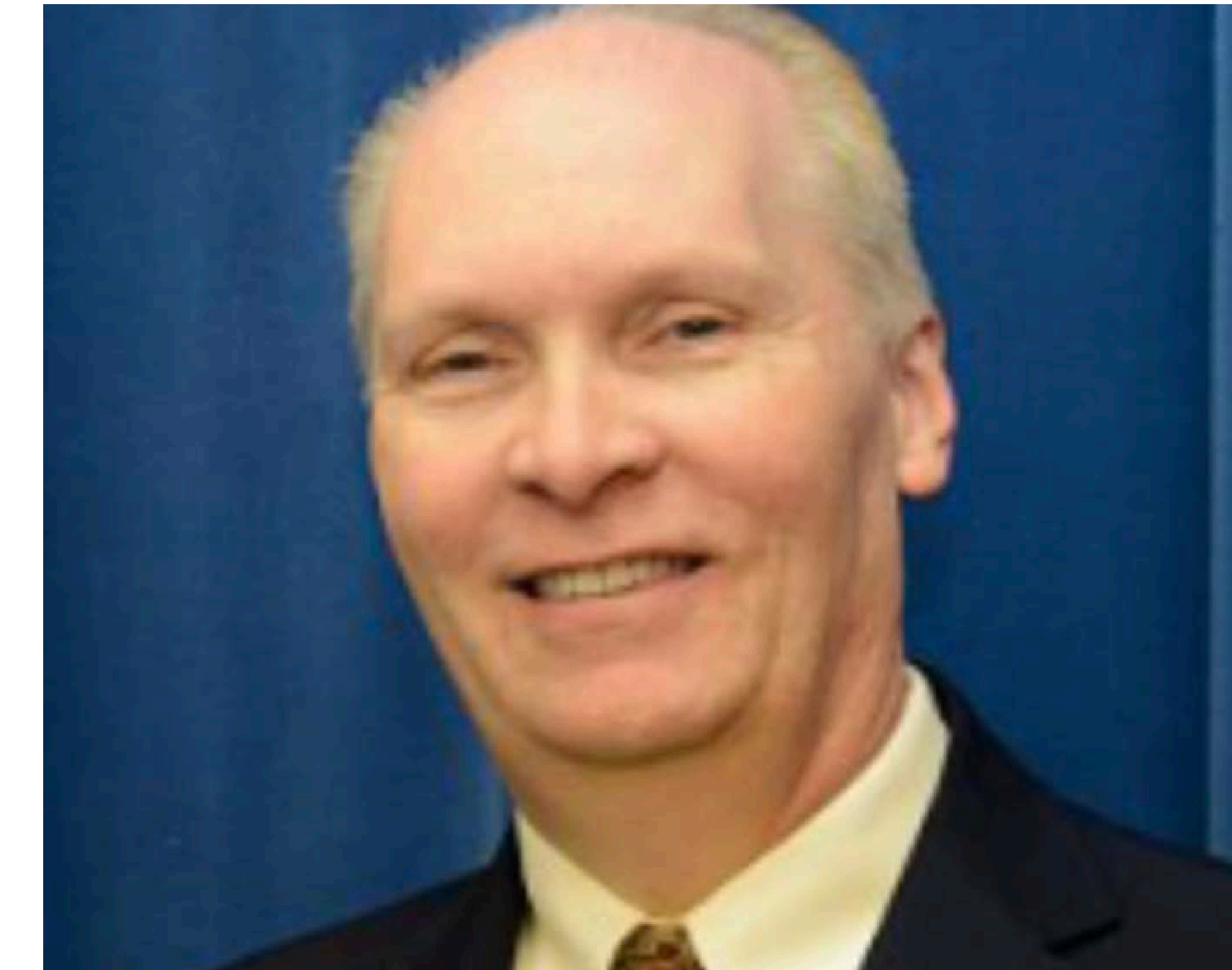
- Dr. Donald Walkovich graduated with the following degrees in OT: Associate's degree in OT in 1979, Bachelor's degree in 1987, Master's degree in 1992, and his Doctorate in 2005.
- As a COTA, Dr. Walkovich primarily worked in long-term care and with clients who had developmental disabilities. While pursuing his bachelor's degree. He also worked as Teaching Assistant which sparked his interest in teaching and education.
- As an occupational therapist (OT), he worked in outpatient, home health, and industrial rehabilitation settings and did some consulting.
- Dr. Walkovich has previously held positions as an assistant professor, professor, and chair in the department of OT and is currently the Dean at Saint Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania
- Throughout his career in occupational therapy, Dr. Walkovich has been involved on the state and national levels.
 - At the state level, he has served in seven positions within the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association.
 - At the national level, he has served in leadership roles with the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education.
- Dr. Walkovich has received multiple awards throughout his career as an OT and an educator.
- He has contributed to the knowledge of profession through presentations and publications at the state and national level.

Timeline Literature Review

- The values and beliefs of the profession of occupational therapy were formed by the historic events that occurred in the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries (Reed, 2006).
- In the late 1970's, occupational therapy (OT) practice was influenced by World War II while making a shift from a holistic and occupation-based approach to more of a medical and bottom-up approach (Christiansen & Haertl, 2014).
- In 1976, the Eastern and Western Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Associations reunited to form the Pennsylvania Occupational Therapy Association ("About the Pennsylvania," n.d.)
- During the 1980s and 1990s, there were advances made in science, technology, education, and health care which influenced the profession of OT (Christiansen & Haertl, 2014).

Methodology

- Throughout this qualitative study, a life history approach was used to maintain focus on the participants involvement in the evolution of occupational therapy practice.
- The Kawa model was used to guide this life history.
- The participant was selected from a participant list which was compiled through purposive sampling by the project directors.
- Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview.
- The semi-structured interview was guided by an interview schedule prepared by the project directors and additional questions specific to the participant were added based on his CV.
- The interview that was recorded and took place over Zoom for approximately one hour.
- Trustworthiness components of this study include:
 - Credibility as the data was directly obtained from Dr. Walkovich; therefore, this data is assumed to be credible and true.
 - Data triangulation as the student research obtained data from multiple sources including an internet search, journal articles, and the participant himself in order to ensure data validity.
 - Member checking as the student researcher sent the poster and paper drafts to the participant to ensure the information is accurate and valid.



Data Analysis

- The OT student researcher documented in a reflexive journal throughout the data analysis process to increase the trustworthiness of this study.
- The researcher consulted the project directors to receive feedback throughout the data analysis process.
- The interview was recorded in audio and video formats on a laptop before being transcribed verbatim and initially coded into 24 codes which reflected the main points that were discussed throughout the interview.
- The OT student researcher then further developed the codes into 4 categories and 13 themes by finding commonalities between them.

Findings

- Categories and Corresponding Themes:
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Collaboration with OTAs and other health care disciplines
 - Adapting to the client's needs and environment
 - Dr. Walkovich strongly believes that occupation is the root of OT practice
 - Education
 - Educational shifts challenge OTs
 - Dr. Walkovich stated that licensure helps advance the profession of OT
 - Choice is an important component of deciding what OT degree to pursue

Findings Continued

- Evolution of OT
 - Legislation and advocacy spread awareness and understanding of OT
 - Dr. Walkovich stated that he utilizes his OT skills in everyday life
 - OT has evolved from being a craft-based to an evidence-based profession
- Personal Experience
 - Dr. Walkovich's motivation helped him advance his career and the profession of OT
 - Dr. Walkovich integrates personal experiences from his career into his practice
 - Dr. Walkovich values the mentors and leaders in his life
 - Everything in Dr. Walkovich's life happened for a reason at the right time

Discussion/Conclusions

- By utilizing his strong internal motivation and passion for OT, Dr. Walkovich has advanced his education and career along with the profession. He feels that his involvement at the state and national level has strongly impacted the lives of his students and his clients.
- Dr. Walkovich has a passion for advancing the profession of occupational therapy and the work that he has done to help shape it.
- He utilized the positions that he held at a state and national level, especially on the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE), to further occupational therapy education.

Acknowledgment

- Sincere thanks to Dr. Walkovich for his time and willingness participate in this project and share his story.

References

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