

Life History of Sandy Hanebrink, OTR/L, CLP, FAOTA

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Abstract

- 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 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.

Description of Sandy Hanebrink

- Sandy began her eight-year journey to OT in 1989 after receiving transverse myelitis from an antibiotic allergic reaction. Through rehabilitation, peer mentoring, and being a Paralympian, she entered the OT program at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) in the last baccalaureate class in 1990.
- As a student, she co-founded the MDI with Lavonne Fox and Shep Kshepakaran; she also became the chair and co-chair of the NOTPD.
- After graduating in 1997 with her Bachelor's in OT, Sandy has worked in multiple areas and continues with her advocacy at the local and national levels:
 - School systems in a rural setting
 - Ergonomics
 - Ticket to Work under the Social Security Administration
 - Executive Director for Touch the Future, Inc. in assistive technology
 - ADA consulting

Methodology

- **Participant Selection:** The participant was selected from a participant list compiled through purposive sampling by the project directors. 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.
- **Interview Schedule:** 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. The student researchers were allowed to modify or add interview questions as needed for each specific interview.
- The Kawa Model was used to guide the project by identifying the life flow, barriers, resources, and contexts influencing occupational therapy practice.

Data Analysis and Findings

- **Systematic evolution of the OT profession**
 - Sandy believes that the changes in the educational standards and organizational policies have the potential to regress the vision espoused by the profession.
 - Sandy believes that with the shifts in educational standards, there will be greater difficulties for individuals with lower socioeconomic status and other minority groups to access academics.
 - Sandy believes the changes to the entry-level OTD will bring more consequences than benefits to the profession.
 - Sandy believes diversity within all leadership in AOTA is important.
- **Personal journey**
 - Sandy believes that her involvement in various activities including leadership, peer mentoring, Paralympics, and consulting, allowed her to embrace her identity as a Disabled occupational therapist.
 - Sandy's journey continues to include barriers—the biggest being stereotypes and attitudes against people with disabilities; her advocacy for herself and her communities smash those barriers to increase access.
 - Sandy's persistence and passion continue to guide her development as a person and professional.
- **Influences over the years**
 - Sandy continues to reflect on how the evolution of different influences—technology, legislation, accessibility, mentors, movements, and disability—have influenced occupational therapy as a whole and within her own practice.
 - Sandy believes cultural shifts for embracing disability as an identity within the profession must metamorphose in order to truly embrace the value of occupational therapy's identity.
 - Sandy's influences from her mentors, connections, networking, and opportunities have benefitted her in her journey over the years.

Discussion/Conclusion

- Over the years, the systematic evolution of occupational therapy, countless influences, and her personal journey to become an occupational therapist [with disabilities] have embraced Sandy's persistence and passion to advocate for individuals with disabilities within and outside of the profession.
- Sandy believes the different changes that are on the way will bring both positive and negative impacts to the occupational therapy profession in embracing the value of education and the identity as a whole.
- There continues to be gaps and barriers in research that influence the relationships between people with and without disabilities, especially in occupational therapy.
- More research and advocacy needs to evolve in order to see equity and justice between abled and disabled people in the occupational therapy profession and in society.



Literature Review

- 1920: Vocational Rehabilitation was founded to help people with disabilities.
- 1967: South Carolina created the first Barrier Free Codes.
- 1973: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was passed.
- 1981: Portable computers were invented.
- 1988: Assistive Technology Act passed into law.
- 1990: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed into legislation.
- 1990s: Multicultural Diversity and Inclusion (MDI) Network and Network of OT Practitioners with Disabilities and Supporters (NOTPD) founded.



References

- American Occupational Therapy Association. (n.d.). *Multicultural interests* - AOTA. Retrieved from www.aota.org/Practice/Manage/Multicultural.aspx
- Touch the future - A LINK to independent living (2019). Retrieved from <https://touchthefuture.us/>

