

Evolution of Occupational Therapy Practice: Life History of Susan Haiman, MPS, OT/L, FAOTA

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Introduction

Purpose

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 Participant

Susan Haiman is an accomplished occupational therapist who has an extensive number of achievements in the field of OT. Her primary areas of practice have been in mental health and education. She has also held various leadership positions in POTA throughout her career such as: Legislative chair, president, vice president, and mental health partnership committee chair. Her other achievements include writing articles, books, and giving presentations on various mental health topics. Throughout her career, Susan has received various honors such as: Retired Educator Commendation (2015), AOTA Service Awards (1998-2012, 2012-



2019), POTA Award of Outstanding Achievement (2003), and Certificate of Excellence in Leadership, Professionalism, Academic Performance and Contributions to the New School for Social Research. Some of her notable employment positions include: Assistant professor and associate professor for the graduate program in OT for Philadelphia University, associate professor emerita for the graduate program in OT for Jefferson University, laboratory instructor for the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia, and laboratory instructor for Temple University. Susan is incredibly passionate about being an advocate for mental health in the field of occupational therapy. Throughout Susan's various employment positions, she has been able to touch the lives of many students and clients.

Literature Review

- In 1970 The AOTA Board of Management develops a 12-week curriculum to train COTAs for general practice.
- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 includes major civil rights protections for people with disabilities. The first PhD program in occupational therapy is approved at New York University.
- In 1977 AOTA adopts the first stand-alone Occupational Therapy Code of Ethics; therapists are required to abide by the Code or be censured. The 1926 Pledge and Creed was only aspirational and voluntary.

Methodology

- This is a qualitative study done using a life history approach.
- Participants were assigned from a list developed by the course instructors through purposive sampling.
- The semi-structured interview was guided by an interview schedule prepared by the course instructors; the questions on the interview schedule were designed to be used with all the individuals interviewed as part of the larger project.
- Questions were then added using the Kawa model as a guide in order to get information that added to the understanding of different aspects of the participant's life that shaped them in the practice of OT (Turpin & Iwama, 2017).
- Data was gathered through a phone interview that last about two hours.
- The interview was audio recorded and later transcribed.
- Data was collected through the participants Curriculum Vitae that was provided before the start of the interview.

Data Analysis

- A two hour interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and coded with 19 codes.
- From the 19 codes, four categories with themes emerged.
- When splitting the information into codes and themes, the researchers used the Kawa model as guidance. The researchers looked for major turning points in the participant's career as well as different aspects of her life including obstacles and major events that stuck out (Teah & Iwama, 2017).
- The researchers used multiple data collection sources.
- Through the data analysis process, the researchers established trustworthiness by reflecting on their experiences as researchers and documented their biases to the study in order to increase the readability and validity.

Findings and Discussion

Educational experiences

Education has played an important role in Susan's life. She placed a high value on being in the classroom with her students. Susan believes advocacy is an important part of practice.

Personal Experiences

Susan's ability to remain humble throughout her career is commendable. Throughout her career, she was able to impact both the lives of her students and clients. Susan also believes family is a major priority in her life.

Politics and Leadership Positions

Susan consistently advocated for OT's role in mental health as this was very important to her. Her assertiveness and willing to take initiative allowed her to create change through hiring a lobbyist to advocate for the profession in AOTA. As an educator, Susan encouraged students to take advantage of opportunities to help bolster their career.

Occupational Over Time

Susan is passionate about the role of occupational therapy in mental health. She values being a person in the environment clients can count on. Throughout her career, she has faced many challenges but grew to learn from them.

Conclusion

Final assertion

By utilizing her personal strengths, such as her ability to be assertive, take initiative, and connect and engage with others, Susan was able to impact many students and clients throughout her career. These same personality traits allowed her to create great change and advocate for mental health throughout her leadership positions in the profession.

Conclusion

Susan's interview provided a profound understanding and insight of her values and motivations that carried her through her OT career and allowed her to successfully partake in her various leadership and educational positions. Through Susan's CV, interview, and other outside research, the researchers were able to develop an understanding of the major challenges and accomplishments that impacted her throughout her career. Susan's passion for the profession and ability to take initiative allowed her to make many significant changes in the field of occupational therapy.

References

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