Vision OTA PTA:

Charting the Course for OTA/PTA Practice in Canada

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April 2019 INPTRA Conference – Geneva, Switzerland
Objectives

Participants will:

• Understand the context of OTA and PTA practice in Canada, both in Québec and across the rest of the country
• Be familiar with the educational preparation of OTAs and PTAs, and how consistency and quality of graduates are ensured
• Be able to briefly describe the Vision OTA PTA project (2017-2019)
Canada and Québec – Geography Lesson

(Total population 2016 = 35,151,728)
Canadian Population Distribution

Source: Statistics Canada, Demography Division
Canadian Health Care

▪ Publicly funded system, Federal transfer payments to provinces

▪ Administered by provincial health ministries

▪ Some provinces charge a user fee (often income-based, and often paid by employers as part of benefits package)

▪ Physiotherapy and occupational therapy not usually funded publicly – lower income usually receive some funding, and others use extended health insurance programs
Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists

▪ Educated at the Master’s degree entry-level
▪ Regulated provincially – legislative differences between provinces
▪ Regulatory practice standards somewhat consistent, with some provincial differences, often dictated by legislation
▪ PTAs and OTAs are not regulated – work under the supervision of PTs and OTs
▪ In 2017, there were 17,675 OTs and 22,985 PTs practising in Canada
Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists

- Supervisory responsibilities of PTs and OTs are identified in practice standards. PTs and OTs, generally, are responsible to:
  - Assess the competence of the assistant
  - Assign a task based on competence
  - Establish a communications plan
  - Ensure ongoing supervision

- PTs and OTs maintain responsibility and accountability for physiotherapy services and occupational therapy services
| OTAs & PTAs in Canada: Quick overview |  
|--------------------------------------|---|
| **Outside of Québec**                | **TRP/PRT in Québec** |
| Not regulated                        | Regulated |
| Can practise as OTAs, PTAs, or as OTA/PTAs (and other names) | Practise only as PRT (title) |
| Provide services only under the supervision of OTs and PTs | Provide services alone or in collaboration with PTs or MDs |
| Can learn on the job **OR** | Cannot learn on the job |
| Often jointly trained in (~two-year) education programs | 3 year program (College) |
| Accreditation of education programs - since 2012, voluntary | Accreditation under the supervision of the Minister of Higher Education, mandatory |
The regulation of PRTs (PTA) in Quebec

What we’ve learned in 15 years …

But first, our mission

1) To protect the public;
2) To control the quality of the physiotherapy services;
3) To develop the physiotherapy profession.

How do we fulfill our mission to protect the public?

1) Admission;
2) Inspection;
3) Investigative powers (syndic)
The regulation of PRTs (PTA) in Quebec

- Physiotherapist reserved activities require clinical skills and clinical reasoning to be able to provide the best possible care to the patient.
- To be able to protect the public adequately, we have to regulate professionals who provide those reserved activities, including PRTs.
The regulation of PRTs (PTA) in Quebec

- In Quebec, we have regulated PRTs (PTA) since 2003 (2500 members out of 8000)
- Overview of our experience
The regulation of PRTs (PTA) in Quebec

- Regulating a group in the professional system increases their credibility
- The counterpart is to be held responsible for his actions (accountable)
- Rules to respect
- Fees to pay for a licence yearly
- Professional inspection on a regular basis
- Mandatory continuing education
- Professional liability insurance
The regulation of PRTs (PTA) in Quebec

In conclusion …

▪ Regulating a group in the professional system increases their credibility and the patient safety

▪ In counterpart, PRT's have to live with legal obligations and a very controlled costly and legal environment.
OTA PTA Education in Canada

Trained on-the-job

- Assistants and aides used > 40-50 years with PT and OT
- Often nursing assistants → trained for PT and OT specific skills

Formal Education

- 1988 report: recommended assistant training programs (OT, PT, SLP)
- Early 1990s, three programs (BC, AB, ON)
  - OTA/PTA/Rec Assistant certificate (1 yr)
  - OTA Dip certificate (1 yr)/OTA Dip (1.5 yr)
  - PTA Dip certificate (1 yr)/PTA Dip (1.5 yr)
OTA PTA Education Progression in Canada

- Programs began in 1990s
- Professions had workforce challenges, often in rural settings
- Government supported curriculum development
- Initial programs were in major urban and rural western Canada
- Competency Profile Development (CPA 2001/2012, CAOT 2008)
- Regulatory bodies reactive to landscape
- OTA/PTA Program Accreditation in 2012
- What's next?? Vision Project
OTA PTA Education in Canada

Early challenges (OTA PTA educators, associations, graduates)
• Consistency of education between programs
• Workplace variance in role and activities
• Public protection in terms of treating patients

Proposed solutions
• Competency Profile development
• Accreditation of education programs
Solutions: OTA PTA Competency Profiles

Developed by physiotherapy stakeholders (regulators, educators, association, accreditors)
- 2002: ECs of Physiotherapist Support Workers in Canada
- 2012: ECP for Physiotherapist Assistants in Canada

Developed by Canadian Association of Occupational Therapy
- 2009: Practice Profile for Support Personnel in Occupational Therapy
- 2018: name changed → Practice Profile for Occupational Therapist Assistants
PTA Essential Competency Profile (NPAG)

OTA Practice Profile (CAOT)
Joint Agreement between CAOT and PEAC

- PEAC to develop accreditation for education programs

2010-2012: Accreditation Standards Development

- Six Standards:
  - Program
  - Faculty
  - Students
  - Program Evaluation
  - Accountability
  - OTA and PTA competencies
Accreditation Standards (2012)
Solutions: Accreditation Process

2011-2012: Pilot Accreditation
• three programs across Canada

2012: Publication of Standards/process
• 2012-2018: 22 programs accredited, 7 candidate programs

2016: Strategic Plan
• Vision for OTA PTA in Canada
OTA PTA Accreditation (April 2019)

Affiliated Programs as of April 2019

- Accreditation Status
- Candidacy Status

Affiliated Program National Distribution - April 2019

- Candidacy Status
- Accreditation Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Candidacy</th>
<th>Accreditation</th>
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<td>BC</td>
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Ongoing Challenges: Graduates and Employers

- Educational Preparation
- Association Membership
- Job and Diploma Title
- OT and PT Regulatory Interest

DISCONNECT
Ongoing Challenges: OTA PTAs and OTA PTA stakeholders

Inconsistent job description, employers unaware of competencies/supervisory relationship

Not all PTs and OTs aware of supervisory responsibilities

Many PTs and OTs unsure how to best use assistants, and what tasks they can and cannot perform

Under-utilization/over-utilization of assistants

Potentially unsafe/high-risk practice

Difficult to gather OTA PTAs together nationally (or provincially)

→ to seek their input

→ for them to advocate for themselves and their practice

Vision OTA PTA Project
Why?

- Overall objective is to agree on a vision of how OTAs and PTAs can best contribute to the health and wellness of Canadians

- Unknown how many OTAs, PTAs and OTA/PTAs are practising in Canada, or how to contact them

- Important members of the healthcare team – how can their voice be heard?

- Not sure if all stakeholders agreed upon the potential contribution OTAs and PTAs can make

- Difficult to establish a vision and a path forward if there were disparate views about that overall objective
Who?

- Steering Committee includes representatives from:
  - OTA/PTA educators
  - PT regulators, OT regulators
  - Practising OTAs, practising PTAs
  - OT and PT national associations

- OT educators, PT educators informed of progress and invited to participate

- Participants
  - All of the above, and employers and patients

- Funders
  - CAOT, CAPR, CPA
Vision for OTA PTA in Canada

**Steering Committee 2017**
- CAOT
- CPA
- National regulators
- National accreditors
- National educators
- OTA
- PTA

**Stage 1 Survey**
- Fall 2017
- >1500 responses
- Identified key topics: consensus/dissent

**Stage 2 Online Discussion Forum**
- Fall 2018
- >100 participants nationally
- Two Phases

**Executive Summary**
- Released March 15
- Report reviewed by stakeholder groups by July 15
- Next steps
Vision OTA PTA project - Overview

- Looking for consensus, all key stakeholders:
  - OTs, PTs, OTA/PTAs, employers, patients, regulators, educators
- Stage 1: Nationwide survey (over 1500 respondents) – Fall 2017
- Stage 2: Nationwide online facilitated discussion groups/focus groups (over 100 participants) – Fall 2018
  - Phase 1: initial questions to generate discussion and share perspectives Sept (2 days)
  - Phase 2: targeted discussion topics to establish consensus and suggest actions to achieve the desired future state Oct (3 days)
- Stage 3 to be determined
Stage 1: Survey

- Fall 2017
- Circulated broadly to 11 key stakeholder groups
- Questions asked respondents to rate statements about:
  1. the current state for OTAs and PTAs
  2. how they would like to see the state for OTAs and PTAs in five years
  3. the value of certain resources and opportunities
Stage 1: Survey

- 1549 complete survey responses from PTs, OTs, OTA/PTAs and PRTs across Canada:

<table>
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<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tr>
<td>OT or PT</td>
<td>709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTA/PTA dual or single role</td>
<td>814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other regulated health professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRP/PRT (Québec)</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1549</strong></td>
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- Analysed quantitatively, analyzed by discipline
Stage 1: Survey – what we learned

Areas of disparate views between stakeholder groups included:

- Regulation – yes or no? If yes, by what regulatory body?
  - Some saw regulation as important, but only eventually – longer term – if ever
- Use of a consistent job title but unclear what that title should be
- Value of more resources and continuing education, but unclear what they should be
Stage 2: Online discussions

- Ethics approval granted (UBC)
- 110 participants chosen (signed consent forms) from over 300 expressions of interest
- 102 participants participated over five days of discussions Fall 2018
- Discussion topics related to:
  1. Competency
  2. Job Titles
  3. Supervision
  4. Regulation
  5. Professional association membership
Participants

- Occupational Therapist: 11
- Physical Therapist: 13
- OTA PTA Educator…: 7
- OT and PT Regulator: 18
- OT and PT Educator…: 7
- Physical Therapist: 8
- Occupational Therapist: 1
- Employer: 14
- Patient: 31
Participants

Location of Participants

- BC: 15
- AB: 17
- SK: 9
- MB: 3
- QC: 1
- ON: 40
- NS: 7
- NB: 3
- NFL: 7
- PEI: 5
- NT: 3

Number of Participants
Key Messages

▪ not in order of priority but in order of the discussions that took place online
▪ some actions described may be more easily achievable than others
▪ achievement of some may need to wait until other work has been completed
▪ other components of the “desired future state” of the practice of OTA/PTAs may need to be addressed in next steps or future stages
<table>
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<td>Recommend creation and better communication of educational materials to support standards of practice for supervision of OTA/PTAs</td>
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Recommend creation and better communication of educational materials to support standards of practice for supervision of OTA/PTAs

- Education of OT and PT students about OTA & PTA competencies and supervision practice standards
- Education of OTA PTA students about the limits of their own competencies and about OT and PT supervision practice standards
- Better dissemination of existing supervision regulatory standards and resources to OTs and PTs
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities
Recommend investigating the feasibility of a certification program through CAOT/CPA

- “…Joint association to represent OT, PT and OTA & PTAs. We share so many common issues, and would gain strength in numbers…”

- Stepping stone to regulation

- Certification to ensure consistency between graduates from different programs

- Provides a consistent title: ‘certified’

- “Certification can offer some of the things that OTA/PTAs and other stakeholders want in terms of standardizing care, practice, knowledge, and skills while raising the profile and highlighting the value of OTA/PTAs”
Recommend exploring the creation of a joint CAOT/CPA membership tier for OTA/PTAs

- OTAs can join CAOT, PTAs can join CPA but not cost effective if dual trained
- Joint organization – cost effective, reflects joint education, joint practice
- CAOT/CPA have the infrastructure to create a joint tier
Recommend use of consistent title

- Therapist assistant or therapy assistant
- Use of “/” or “&” (OTA/PTA or OTA & PTA)
- Agreement that there should be a consistent title, but the preferred title was only slightly in favour of therapist and “/”
  
  occupational therapist assistant/physiotherapist assistant (OTA/PTA)
- Some discussion still required, but clear agreement that the title OTA/PTA should not be used when being supervised by/assigned task by other health professionals
Recommend creation of a dual competency profile

- Currently separate competency profiles
- General agreement (92%) that dual profile would need the needs of stakeholders
- Dual profile would better align with education program curriculum, the accreditation standards, and the practice environments
- Dual profile could be used for future certification
- Less agreement about when a dual profile should be developed, who should fund development
Next Steps

Dissemination  Actions  Celebration  Momentum  Feedback
Acknowledgements

Funding from

▪ Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators
▪ Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
▪ Canadian Physiotherapy Association

A collaboration of:

Occupational Therapist Assistant & Physiotherapist Assistant Education Accreditation Program
Thank you!
Questions?
Comments?
References


