



Letter to the Editor

Occupational therapy in the times of the pandemic

The Philippine Academy of Occupational Therapists, Inc.

Correspondence should be addressed to: paot.org@gmail.com

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We have witnessed how the COVID-19 pandemic has stifled various social, economic, and health structures and mechanisms on a large scale. Everyone is on a survival mode complicated by a political milieu characterized by divisiveness and hate. All of these processes tend to be more complex for persons with disabilities, who are our primary stakeholders. Various restrictions and prevailing apprehensions hinder opportunities for continuous occupational participation across all areas.

This complicated scenario reverberates the call for the profession and the Filipino OTs to step up and accept the challenge of ensuring that all stakeholders are still able to participate in various life situations through engagement in meaningful occupation. This unfamiliar territory calls for innovations and alternative forms of service provision. PAOT, Inc. released its guidelines on the utilization of telehealth to provide a safer service delivery option. True to its commitment to capacitating all its members regardless of practice forms or settings, the Academy organized OTalakayan with its first season, comprised of 14 episodes covering the various tenets of providing occupational therapy services through telehealth. Best practices are shared, and opportunities for dialogue among professionals are promoted.

Responsiveness and contextualization refine any therapeutic process. Inevitably, there would still be clients who will benefit more from in-person service delivery due to the presence of an urgent

need and possible lack of resources. With this, PAOT, Inc. released its interim guidelines on the practice of occupational therapy amidst the COVID-19 situation with the intent of ensuring that all services will be delivered in a safe, humane, and ethical manner. Consistent in all of these guidelines is the call for the Filipino OT to look over one's self and overall well-being before the discharge of various functions. PAOT, Inc. implemented a couple of programs to provide monetary assistance to professionals and students who had difficulty in meeting their basic needs due to the unforeseen discontinuance of their work, or that of their immediate families. A Mental Health Crisis Response Program is also conceptualized to serve this purpose for the professionals who also experience disruption of their routines and participation in various occupations brought about by this pandemic.

On top of all these programs, PAOT, Inc. is continuously urging professionals to promote the health and well-being of others, mediate in the redesign of one's and other's routines, lifestyles, and role assumption, address the psychosocial and mental health concerns inevitable during crisis situations and promote occupational justice of individuals who might be affected by the quarantine measures. These tasks go beyond conventional service delivery, and the current situation calls for such a bold stance.

Embedded in our Filipino psyche is upholding the spirit of *bayanihan* and now more than ever

with all these intentions in mind, the Filipino OTs need to look after one another and have a communal responsibility to ensure that all possible stakeholders will at least be given a chance to participate in things that matter to him/her despite these trying times.

PARA SA PROPESYON. PARA SA BAYAN.