

Life History of Dr. Sheri Montgomery, OTR/L, OTD

By: Mikaela Karpen, OTS and Stacey Sigmond, OTS

Introduction

This life history one of 29 life history interviews that are a part of a larger project, *Life Histories of Individuals Who Have Been Influential in Developing Occupational Therapy (OT) in North Dakota and Wyoming*. The purpose of the project is to gather information about the history and evolution of occupational therapy (OT) practice in North Dakota and Wyoming through life histories of individual who have been influential in developing OT in these two state. It is anticipated that the life history process will be a powerful way to gather this information. This study is intended to provide current and future generations of occupational therapist a view of the history and how OT practice has evolved from its inception to current practice in North Dakota and Wyoming.

Description of Participant



Dr. Sheri Montgomery has been a practicing OT for 37 years in Wyoming, Utah, and Florida. She graduated with honors from Tuff University-Boston School of Occupational Therapy in 1980. She began practicing in Wyoming where she worked in multiple setting and became an active member in the Wyoming Occupational Therapy Association (WYOTA). Dr. Sheri Montgomery served as the president of WYOTA between 1989-1993. During her time in Wyoming Dr. Sheri Montgomery received her certification in sensory integration (SI) and neuro-developmental treatment (NDT). While practicing in Wyoming, she assisted in passing the state's OT licensure law. Dr. Montgomery decided to pursue her doctorate degree in OT and graduated from the University of Utah with her doctorate in 2013. She is currently a factually member at the University of St. Augustine Occupational Therapy Department

Dr. Sheri Montgomery is an active member in the OT profession. She holds many positions in multiple affiliations. She is currently the American Occupational Therapy Association Board of Director. She holds active memberships in Wyoming, Utah, and Florida OT associations.

Literature Review

- Between 1980-1999 there was an emphasis on establishing evidence-based research, efficacy of treatment, and defining the scope of practice. (Christiansen & Haertl, 2014)
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Americans with Disabilities Act influenced the practice. (The American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017)
- Licensure and certifications had high importance due to the need to provide evidence of the profession. (The American Occupational Therapy Association, 2017)
- Theories and models began to support the profession and the evidence of practice. (Christiansen & Haertl, 2014)
- Coal-bed methane provided an economic boom in multiple areas of Wyoming during the 1980's. During this time, Wyoming was also the leading state in the nation in coal production. (Roberts, 2017)

Methodology

- Qualitative research study using a life history approach
- Dr. Sheri Montgomery was one of 29 participants selected through purposive sampling
- Initial contact was made by course instructors and then participants were assigned to student researchers.
- IRB was obtained by the course instructors
- Informed consent was acquired by the student researchers
- Data was collected through a video conference interview using a pre-determined semi-structured interview schedule that was modified by student researchers.
- Type of data collected
 - Curriculum vitae
 - Internet search
 - Interview
 - Reflective journaling
- The interview lasted 1 hour and 24 minutes. Dr. Sheri Montgomery was located in her office at St. Augustine University in St. Augustine, Florida and the student researchers were located in the Casper College Library in Casper, Wyoming.

Data Analysis & Findings

- The Kawa Model was used to guide the research study and identify key aspects of Dr. Sheri Montgomery's life.
- Interview was recorded and transcribed.
- Codes, categories, themes, and assertions were established through examining the transcribed interview and student researcher collaboration.

The Life History of Dr. Sheri Montgomery, OTR/L, OTD			
Codes	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle <input type="checkbox"/> Leadership <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunity <input type="checkbox"/> Professional Identity <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation Difficulties <input type="checkbox"/> Confidence <input type="checkbox"/> Family <input type="checkbox"/> Economy influence <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health <input type="checkbox"/> Preparatory Methods <input type="checkbox"/> Self-reflection	<input type="checkbox"/> Research <input type="checkbox"/> Demands <input type="checkbox"/> Cost <input type="checkbox"/> Affiliation <input type="checkbox"/> Politics <input type="checkbox"/> Schedule <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating <input type="checkbox"/> Legislation <input type="checkbox"/> Early Intervention <input type="checkbox"/> Reimbursement <input type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> Theory <input type="checkbox"/> Intervention Class	<input type="checkbox"/> Practice Setting <input type="checkbox"/> Referrals <input type="checkbox"/> Therapeutic use of self <input type="checkbox"/> Support <input type="checkbox"/> Trust <input type="checkbox"/> Mentor <input type="checkbox"/> Interprofessional Communication <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration <input type="checkbox"/> OTA <input type="checkbox"/> Aide's
Categories	Professional and Personal Identity	Professional Trends	Team Collaboration
Themes	<input type="checkbox"/> Family was involved in every aspect of her career as an OT often making it challenging to find the balance between them. <input type="checkbox"/> As an OT there are many demands on time and energy that are often overlooked.	<input type="checkbox"/> Advocating is essential for empowering the profession and refocusing on the importance of occupations and mental health. <input type="checkbox"/> Advanced and continuing education is needed to validate the profession to improve reimbursement for therapy <input type="checkbox"/> The profession has to be politically aware as politics influence the professions.	<input type="checkbox"/> Dr. Montgomery felt that a strong health care team built on communication skills lead to a trusting health care community. <input type="checkbox"/> She indicated that communication influenced her referrals and therapy outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Each profession brings unique qualities to the health care service team and that we must comprehend what each entity does.
Assertions	Dr. Sheri Montgomery believes that OT become a personal lifestyle for her that has impacted her personal and professional identity, involvement in professional trends, and team collaboration.		

Discussion & Conclusion

During the time Dr. Sheri Montgomery started her career as an OT, there was a need for OTs to establish evidence based research to enhance the profession. Licensure laws and certification were also being encouraged in the profession during this time. In Wyoming there was a need for OTs due to the rural setting and economic boom.

The personal and professional identity theme is an ongoing life process. Dr. Sheri Montgomery found it difficult to balance her family life and her career life. Her family became part of the OT world through participating in therapy sessions and attending conferences. While Dr. Sheri Montgomery was practicing in Wyoming, she became certified in SI and NDT. This was influenced by Wyoming's rural setting, needs of the population, and lack of knowledge in implementing these therapies. Balancing her personal and professional life became difficult due to the demands of practicing in a rural setting. The time, money, and energy needed to enhance her career influenced the trajectory of her career and life. Thus, becoming a lifestyle for Dr. Sheri Montgomery.

Dr. Sheri Montgomery also advocated for the importance of OT and where this profession fits into the healthcare system. Dr. Montgomery testified in Wyoming to assist with passing the licensure law for the state. She expressed that OT needed to fit with the evolving society and advocated for the need of continuing education. Dr. Sheri Montgomery decided to go back to school to obtain her doctorate to provide more evidence-based practice for reimbursement in therapy. She expressed that OT was losing its roots in mental health and wanted to refocus on the need of mental health in practice. Dr. Sheri Montgomery makes it a priority to stay current with the professional trends.

With advocating for the profession also comes communication and improving team collaboration. Dr. Sheri Montgomery identified that her referrals and outcomes of therapy were influenced by communication with other disciplines. She also indicated that healthcare professionals need to understand each discipline's scope of practice, which is accomplished with improved communication. Having increased communication and team collaboration provided Dr. Sheri Montgomery with a trusting health care community that supports her through her career.

Overall, Dr. Sheri Montgomery believes that OT became a personal lifestyle for her that has impacted her personal and professional identity, involvement in professional trends, and team collaboration. She is still an active member in the OT community and continues to advocate for the profession.

References

- The American Occupational Therapy Association. (2017). Important events in occupational therapy. Retrieved from <http://www.otcentennial.org/events/>
- Christiansen, C. & Haertl, K. (2014). A contextual history of occupational therapy. In B. Boyt Schell, G. Gillen, & M. Scaffa (Eds.), *Willard & Spackman's occupational therapy* (12th ed.) (pp. 9-45). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Roberts, P. (2017). The oil business in Wyoming. Retrieved from <https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/oil-business-wyoming>
- Retrieved from <https://www.usa.edu/faculty/sheri-montgomery/>