

EDITORIAL

Occupational Therapy in Hand Rehabilitation

The idea of setting up a special issue for our journal first emerged at the editors' meeting a year ago. The aim is to attract both local and international researchers and clinicians to publish their research and clinical work on a focused theme. The topic of the first issue is on "Occupational Therapy in Hand Rehabilitation" followed by special issue in mental health and then, children with special needs.

Since the 1970s, occupational therapists have been actively engaged in hand rehabilitation due to the high incidence of work related hand injuries. Most of the injuries were results of neglected occupational health and safety, long working hours leading to accidents. Occupational therapists worked closely with hand surgeons, nurses and physiotherapists to help these traumatized hand patients maximize their hand function such that they could return to work soon. Our mentors include Professor P.C. Leung, Professor S.P. Chow, Professor Jack Cheng, Professor L.K. Hung and other hand specialists including Mr. C.Y. Wan, Ms. Verna Ngan, Ms. Carol Ng and Ms. Pamela Duncan. They all helped nurture the young therapists to enhance their clinical knowledge and skills in management of complex hand injuries. In the following decade, this specialty continued to excel and became one of the core practice in most of the occupational therapy departments in large hospitals.

With the improvement of occupational health and safety, a lot of machines were manufactured with safety guards. The incidence of traumatized hand injuries has declined significantly in the 1990s. Moreover, a lot of industries have migrated across the border to the Mainland China due to cheaper labor force there. Despite the decline of traumatized hand injuries, more than 13% of occupational therapists in Hong Kong are still practicing hand therapy based on the survey conducted in 2004 (Tse et al., 2004). Most graduates still show great interests to work in the physical rehabilitation settings (Li-Tsang, 2006). Chronic work-related pain syndrome has emerged drastically in recent years due to prolonged repetitive work demands. Occupational therapists have shifted the expertise to work with this new group of patients.

In addition, our therapists have been actively involved in international and local organizations to promote hand therapy practice, namely, the International Federation of Societies for Hand Therapists (IFSHT), the Asia Pacific Federation of Societies for Hand Therapists (APFSHT) and the Hong Kong Society for Surgery of the Hand (HKSSH). With the formation of the Hong Kong Society for Hand Therapy (HKSHT) in 2007, this specialty continues to expand the research and clinical skills in the field of hand rehabilitation.

This special issue is prepared to publicize clinical and research work in this field of practice. There are altogether three original papers, two submitted by our local hand surgeon and occupational therapists, and one from Malaysia. There is a special commentary on the history of hand rehabilitation in Mainland China. One clinical paper was written to demonstrate how an innovative hand splint is designed to manage chronic wrist pain. It is our hope that this special issue will provide a platform from which researchers and clinicians can discuss and exchange ideas in the field of hand rehabilitation. As our journal has recently been listed in the Science Citation Index with impact factor of 0.462, we would like more international researchers to read our journals and cite our work. Together, we will continue to work towards our excellence in the field of occupational therapy.

Cecilia W.P. Li-Tsang

Guest Editor

Special Issue on Occupational Therapy in Hand Rehabilitation

References

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