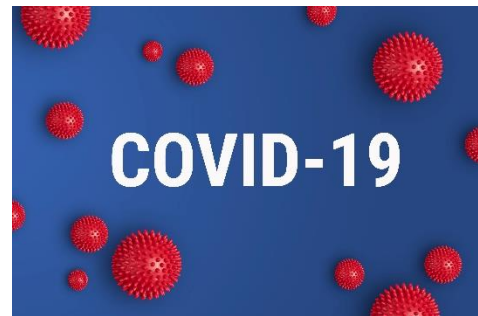


**Association of Caribbean Occupational
Therapists**
COVID-19: Updates from the Caribbean Islands



Message from the President of ACOT:



I warmly welcome all to the Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapists (ACOT) newsletter. ACOT is the unifying umbrella organization supporting Caribbean Occupational Therapists across the region. ACOT's vision is to eliminate professional isolation through facilitating education and networking whilst advocating for the needs of the clients we serve.

The Caribbean along with the rest of the world has experienced uncharted waters due to the lock down, social distancing and health measures put in place by Covid-19. This has created a loss of physical contact with friends and family, substantial changes in daily roles and routines, habits and social outlets, challenges maintaining mental well-being and disruption to therapeutic services all of which are impacting on therapists and clients equally. Certainly, all the countries within the ACOT organization - Barbados, Bahamas, Cayman Islands, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad, and Tobago - are feeling the impact but are demonstrating resilience and determination in maintaining an OT presence in their countries.

The need to keep lines of communication open between our islands and to network and share our skills and knowledge seems more imperative than ever. We therefore warmly invite you all to join our Free 2020 spring/summer webinar series with local and overseas Occupational Therapists presenting in their areas of expertise.

- **14th May 2020 5 pm (AST) - You and Your Mental Health, presented by Phillippa Rolle, Msc. OTR/L.** *Thank you to all who attended and made this webinar a great success. If you missed it, you can view the recording in the "Members Only" section on ACOT website (<http://www.caribbeanot.com/>) or on ACOT Facebook page.*

- **28th May 2020 5 pm (AST) - Telehealth: A model for intervention** (application to all population groups), **presented by Dr. Douglene Jackson, PhD, OTR/L, LMT, ATP, BCTS.**

- 4th June 2020 8 pm (AST) Taiwan OT association Introduction to the Taiwan's Policy and the recommendations for Occupational Therapy, presented by Dr. Athena Tsai, OTR, PhD and Dr. Ching-Yi Wu, OTR, PhD.

We look forward to connecting!
Warmly,
Rachael Gaunt – ACOT president

What is happening in the Caribbean?

By Gabrielle de Villers, Barbados



For the month of April 2020, all countries members of ACOT were in strict lockdown with restricted activity regime. In every country, OTs are still doing their best to continue to provide services and support to their clients and their families. Some OTs are part of the essential/frontline workers and continue to provide daily services mostly in the public health care system (physical medicine and mental health). Other Occupational therapists have transitioned from clinic, home and school sessions to Telehealth during the extended curfew. Since the beginning of May, some countries are slowly entering a first phase of reopening of the public service.

Guyana Association of Occupational Therapists Approach to COVID-19

By Calvin Lawrie, Guyana

Amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, and with a steady increase of cases in Guyana, all the outpatient rehabilitation departments in the capital, Georgetown the country's epicenter, have been shut down. However, with the support from the Ministry of Public Health, Director of Rehabilitation Services, our acute/ inpatients at the Georgetown Public Hospital Corporation are the only patients receiving therapy. Occupational, physio- and speech and language therapists, have been put on a weekly rotation. From Monday to Saturday, patients on each ward receive therapy from a licensed professional. ICU, CICU, burns care unit, medical, surgical, and high dependency wards are wards attended to.



More focus is being placed on Occupational Therapy in the Burn Care Unit.

This Hospital also houses the covid-19 ICU, where upon request, therapists conduct cardio/pulmonary rehab. The team approach has made it easier for us to treat patients holistically and gain immediate support from our other rehabilitation professionals. Upon discharge, patients receive a stringent home program and a referral letter to guide them until the departments re-open.

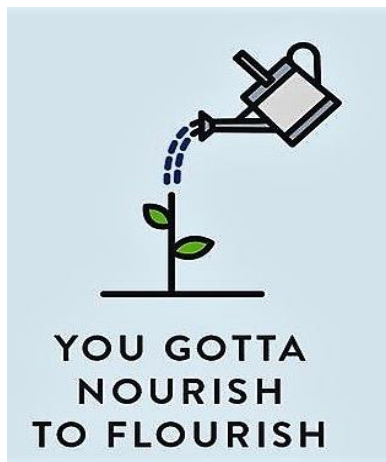
At the Outpatient Rehabilitation Department at the West Demerara Regional Hospital, there has been reduced influx of patients and hands on services offered. The current patients are placed on home activities and exercise programs to channel a successful outcome of goals set.

At present, patients and families that come in with referrals are assessed via interviews and observations. Based on findings and patients goals an illustrated home program is given with a plan to call and follow up progress and adherence to the program. In urgent acute cases, precautionary measures are followed, whenever hands on application is needed then such is done with much care. Occupational Therapist and members of the rehabilitation team are using Tele-Rehabilitation model to treat patients of varying conditions.



COVID-19 and Self Care

By Shenika McIntosh, Bahamas



As you can imagine, this time during COVID-19 is a testing time for many of us. We are still learning how to adapt to the constant changes in our lives, families, communities, and countries. It's important to take the time for YOU! One of the ways I've been approaching COVID-19 is to revisit my hobby in gardening. It is such a great escape to see life grow in a world where so many have lost their lives due to this pandemic. Gardening is my self-care skill that help to ease my anxiety and help me to refocus on the great things in the world. Additionally, growing herbs and vegetables have great environmental benefits and I am pleased to be creating my own food source. Have you revisited a hobby during this time? What are you doing to take care of your self during this pandemic? Try redecorating your bedroom, candle making, creating a new recipe, painting, anything that you enjoy and brings you peace and happiness- DO IT!

The Fantastic World of Online OT with Kids

By Raquel Martinez, Trinidad and Tobago

“I need my equipment”, “no child will listen to me online”, “I have no idea where to even begin”, are all very real thoughts that I had about telehealth with children not much more than a month ago. But after numerous conversations, brain-storming sessions and a sprinkling of Webinars with my fellow therapists, I opted to delve into the fantasy world of telehealth, and now, I can hardly imagine practice exclusive of it.

Tele-sessions in early intervention understandably assume a parent coaching model and there are many benefits of such administration. Virtual sessions allow us to make substantial, lasting change within the natural contexts of our clients and their families. Though not a substitute for in-clinic treatment, the promise of parent coaching is grand; children and parents learn tips and techniques that transcend the walls of the clinic, becoming an integral part of everyday life.

Virtual sessions are empowering. Parents learn to use toys in new ways, to set-up the home to better facilitate function and to become avid play partners. There is nothing more rewarding than witnessing true, unadulterated bonding moments between parent and child, which had they happened in a clinic, may have been attributed to the therapist’s physical presence. I find myself marveling at the wonders of online therapy, not only for my kids, but also for their families. Telehealth will be a part of my new normal, even when I return to my favorite spot on the mat! Will it be a part of yours too?

