

## Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapists COVID-19: Reports from Country Members



### News from Trinidad and Tobago

By Anastasia Raquel Martinez



In Trinidad and Tobago, there are currently over 1700 active cases of COVID-19, and as such, measures are in place to curb the spread of the disease. Therapists are seeing fewer clients per day with adequate time to sanitize in between. In many clinics, telehealth is still being practiced, though buy-in has been difficult. Given the inability to operate at full capacity which necessitates virtual sessions, many therapists have expressed lower than usual caseloads, as some clients prefer to wait until clinics are operating in-person. The Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association (TTOTA) released an official statement guiding therapists to use hospital-grade masks with a face shield when in close contact with clients. The Association posits that face shields alone are not adequate in the fight against COVID-19.

### News from the Bahamas

**Don't give up: A message of hope.**

By Shenika McIntosh

Imagine you're in a race, trying to run to the finish line, and hurdles keep appearing. As you jump over one, another appears. Have you ever experienced this feeling? Well, this is how the members of Occupational therapy Association of The Bahamas felt from September 2019. Just when we were picking up the pieces from Dorian by providing free OT services, establishing support groups, coping strategies and intervention to families who were affected, here comes COVID-19. It has been difficult for everyone all over the world. This year, 2020, we have overcome so many hurdles. But, Guess what? There is hope. There is hope for new opportunities, innovative ideas, witty inventions, and modifications in the way we deliver care for others and ourselves. There is hope for a great future for all of us. As we continue to adapt to the new "norm," we are hopeful that our brothers and sisters around the Caribbean and the world are encouraged to persevere, keep going, and maintain a positive outlook. We are in this together!



**News from Haiti**  
By Ashley Kahila



Haiti saw its first confirmed COVID-19 case on March 19th 2020. At the beginning of October, the number of confirmed cases was 8827 with 229 deaths. Although, the actual number of cases is thought to be significantly higher. Majority of individuals do not receive testing for many reasons including lack of testing, inaccessibility to testing, fear of being attacked if positive, etc. Haiti reopened its borders and removed all restrictions in late July despite the continued rise in cases.

The COVID pandemic affected the majority of OT services as well as the OT bachelor's program. Majority of clinics offering OT shut down for many months. A few clinics were able to do a few consultations via WhatsApp. One clinic was able to compile home exercise programs on paper for patients to pick up and complete at home. Others conducted phone calls

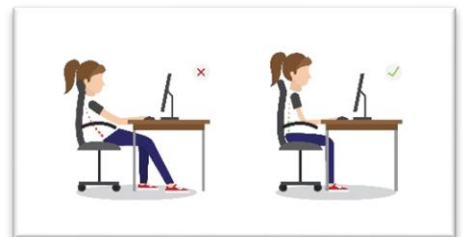


to assist patients as best as possible during the closure. All clinics and services are reopened with majority under precautions such as masks. The OT program had to suspend all in-person classes; however, were able to continue with some education via WhatsApp and self-study. The students are happily back in class and some have been able to complete fieldwork rotations as well.

## News from Jamaica

By Pauline Watson Campbell

The occupational therapists in Jamaica are still fully engaged in offering services to their clients amidst an increasing number of persons diagnosed with the COVID-19 virus. Fleur Minott-Nemphard was featured recently in the Daily Observer where she was interviewed about a series of virtual ergonomic consultations she had hosted. This was addressed primarily to children and adults who are remotely learning or working from home and may be at risk for work related musculo-skeletal disorders.



## News from Barbados

By Nadia Johnson



Barbados has handled the COVID-19 situation generally very well. We had reduced movement and lockdowns from early April 2020 which improved our outcome. Over this period, the majority of the private sector Occupational Therapist were not at work. The OTs at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and psychiatric hospital continued with increased protocols as expected. Some teletherapy was implemented at the psychiatric hospital and in private practice from home with varying degrees of success.



When we began to come out of lockdown in May 2020, OTs who do community visits started up again with reduced caseloads to prioritize those that would be highest at risk of regressing, while keeping distanced from those at highest risk if they were to become ill. Private clinics started to open back up at this time as well, but again with reduced caseloads, also to facilitate adequate sanitization between visits. The last clinicians to return to work were the Occupational Therapists who work within schools as schools have only reopened as of late September.

Overall we have stayed strong as a professional body and supported each other throughout this pandemic. Unfortunately, many of us are still not back up to full caseloads as yet but we are doing well and taking it day by day here in Barbados.

### News from Cayman Islands

By Rachael Gaunt

The Cayman Islands Occupational Therapy Association are soon to restart our planning of the October 2021 ACOT conference. We are currently looking into online options to ensure we can keep the OT community across the Caribbean up-to-date with evidence-based practice!!

Life in the Cayman Islands is currently relatively back to normal with the big change in massive reduction in tourism and very limited flights in/out of the island. Those that do come to the island need to have a negative test before traveling and then quarantine for 14 days and receive a negative test before leaving quarantine. The upshot of this is we are lucky to not have any cases of COVID-19 within the community; the downside is we cannot leave the island as freely as we used to, and tourism is impacted. Another massive positive of the current situation is that with COVID-19 under control, Occupational Therapy Services can offer all our services in person in schools, in the centers/clinics and in homes.



**News from Guyana**

By Errica Canterbury



Guyana has recently opened its new Infectious Disease Hospital due to Covid-19 cases being on the steady rise in the country. It was requested by the Doctors for rehabilitation services to assist with patients who could benefit from chest and limb physiotherapy.



I was given the opportunity to work along side a physiotherapist with these inpatients who have tested positive for Corona virus. Specific patients were identified by the Doctors who we did assist with targeted exercises and advice. We also did group exercise activities, maintaining social distancing, including demonstration of the breathing retraining techniques.

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***COMING SOON:***

***ACOT Mini Online Symposium***

***Date: November 2020***

***Topic: Health and Wellness in Uncertain Times***

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