



Fall 2017

## Upcoming Events:

- **Meridian Mini-Conference September 30, 2017**
- **Legislative Day is Feb 1, 2018**
- **Spring Conference 2018 is scheduled for February 10, 2018**
- **5th Annual MSOTA Run, Walk, or Roll will be held in April 2018! If you are interested in sponsoring or volunteering, let us know! We will never turn down the help!**

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## Annual Conference News!

The 2017 Annual Conference was held on March 25<sup>th</sup> at the Muse Center in Pearl, MS. The conference offered two tracks: physical dysfunction and school-based pediatrics. Many thanks to our own Brad Cooper, OT; Delta District Chair, for presenting Cardiac Rehab and Occupational Therapy and Sleep. Dr. Gordon Lyons, MD, presented the etiology and treatment methodologies of Pain Management. Teresa Laney, SLP; Stacy Smith, OT; and Danielle Whittington, OT; presented the intricacies of Unrolling and Unraveling the School Therapy Case-load.

The 2018 Annual Conference is scheduled for February 10<sup>th</sup> at the Muse Center. Danielle Whittington, Continuing Education Chair, is working to plan another great event for us. There will be multiple tracks offered for either 3 or 6 CEUs. Several areas of interest will be available for therapists and assistants working with various populations. Email blasts and flyers will be broadcast as soon as all speakers are confirmed. Also, check out our website at [www.mississippiota.org](http://www.mississippiota.org) for any updates and event postings. Throughout the year, each District will be offering opportunities to meet and/or offer CEU opportunities near you. This is a great opportunity for you to get involved, network, and earn free CEUs as an MSOTA member. Again, scheduled events will be email blasted to the respective Districts. If you are unsure of your District or District Chair, check out the website for more detailed information.

## 5K Recap!!

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual MSOTA Run, Walk or Roll was held on April 22, 2017, at Holmes Community College. We changed the date this past year from the fall (typically held in September) to April in conjunction with OT Appreciation Month. Many thanks to Kelly Crawford, OT; and Jennifer Donahue, OT; Central District Co-Chairs; for organizing and planning this event. This is our only fundraiser and, typically, nets around \$4K to \$5K for MSOTA. Much of this success was due to our sponsors:

### Gold Sponsors

Baptist Hospital  
North Sunflower Medical Center  
Race Addict  
Reconnect Therapy  
Southern AgCredit  
Tallahatchie General Hospital

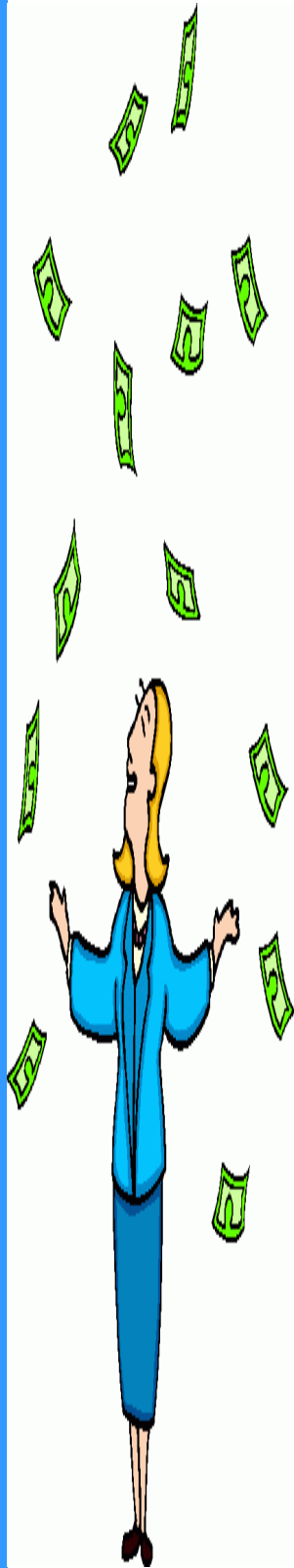
### Silver Sponsors

Drew Ruleville Rotary Club  
Elite Physical Therapy  
Hickory Senior Living  
Medworx Home Medical Supplies  
MS Sports Medicine & Orthopaedic Center  
Performance Rehab Senior Care  
Planters Bank in Ruleville, MS  
Robinson Electric Co, Inc. in Cleveland, MS  
St. Dominic Outpatient Rehabilitation and Hand Management Center  
Summit Health & Rehab Services, Inc.

### Bronze Sponsors

Advance Physical Therapy in Cleveland, MS  
Farm Bureau Insurance/Brian Street in Ruleville, MS  
Jackson Hand & Upper Extremity  
Mid-South Rehab Services, Inc.  
Mississippi Land Bank in Cleveland, MS  
Mugshots Grill and Bar in Flowood, MS  
River Hills Bank in Vicksburg, MS

We couldn't have made it such a successful event without our sponsors, volunteers from the Holmes Community College OTA class, and our runners. As always, your help and support are much appreciated!  
keep track of all our events on our website at [www.mississippiota.org](http://www.mississippiota.org).



## News from the MSOTA Reimbursement Chair Amanda Jordan, OTR/L



### REIMBURSEMENT ISSUES: CURRENT AND FOLLOW-UP

Amanda Jordan, OTR/L

MSOTA Reimbursement Chair

#### Proposed Rule Affecting the Provision of Custom-Fabricated Orthotics

In our last letter, I mentioned that occupational therapists and physical therapists have been exempt from quality and accreditation standards for furnishing and fabricating prosthetics and custom orthotics for Medicare beneficiaries. However, on January 12, 2017; the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) released a proposed rule that would lift this exemption. This would mean that “occupational therapists who furnish and fabricate custom orthotics will have to be “licensed by the state [as a qualified provider of prosthetics and custom orthotics], or...certified by the American Board for Certification in Orthotics and Prosthetics...or by the Board for Orthotist/Prosthetist Certification;” according to AOTA.

CMS accepted comments on this proposed rule through March 13, 2017. The current status as posted by the American Society of Hand Therapists is that comments are still under review, there is no more discussion that directly relates to the proposed rule, and no timeline has been established for making a final determination on this rule. I will keep you posted as new information comes our way.

#### Misvalued OT Evaluation Codes

Earlier this year, AOTA discovered that CMS **lowered** the reimbursement rate on the new tiered occupational therapy evaluation codes due to an error in the amount used for the practice expense portion of the code in some MAC regions. AOTA met with CMS, who has corrected the error in its April Quarterly Update Transmittal #3719 and has communicated the correction to the Part B Medicare administrative contractors.

In addition, CMS issued Change Request 9977, which states Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) are not responsible for searching through files to identify misvalued claims, but will adjust those claims brought to their attention retroactive to January 1, 2017. Occupational therapists should contact their individual MACs to determine how to resubmit the underpaid evaluation claims.

Mississippi is in Jurisdiction H which is covered by Novitas Solutions, Inc. Their website is [www.novitas-solutions.com](http://www.novitas-solutions.com).

#### SNF PPS Proposed Payment Reform

For several years, we have heard talk of how CMS has been wanting to change the current PPS RUG model. CMS feels that the current system is primarily driven by therapy services provided, it is predicated on “financial considerations” as opposed to patient needs, and reports by OIG and MedPAC have expressed concerns with incentives with the current RUG model.

## News from the MSOTA Reimbursement Chair Amanda Jordan, OTR/L



The new payment model is called the Resident Classification System – Version 1 (RCS – 1). This model would be a total replacement of the current RUG model, not a revision. RCS – 1 would change the system to emphasize patient characteristics, not services received. Basically, payment would be established on how the patient presents rather than how much service is provided.

When comparing the two models, it would look something like this:

RUG Model	RCS-1 Model
2 case-mix components	4 case-mix components
Index maximizing	Index combining
Group/concurrent deterrents	Group/concurrent benefits
5 scheduled PPS assessments	1 scheduled PPS assessment
Constant rates for length of stay	Declining rates for length of stay
Maximum therapy incentivized	Minimum therapy incentivized

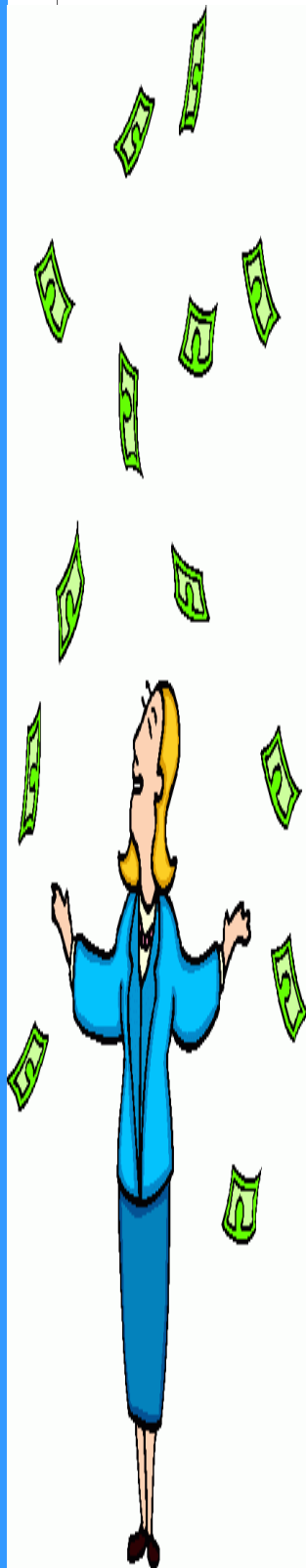
RCS-I would consist of 5 components, each with its own payment determinants, including a basic payment, or non-case-mix component, which covers SNF resources that do not vary according to patient characteristics, and 4 case-mix adjusted payment components which include PT/OT combined, SLP, nursing/social services, and non-therapy ancillary services.

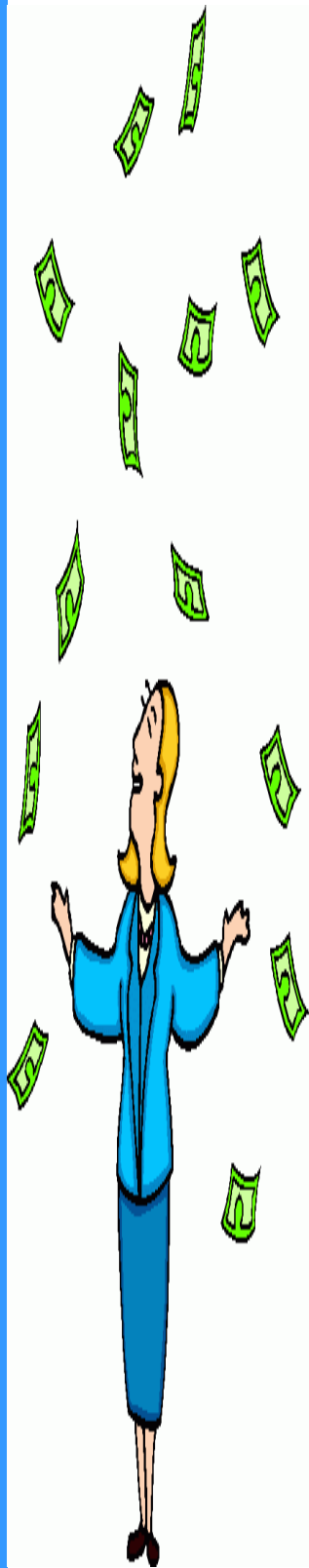
The combining of PT and OT is of concern to AOTA. Although this combination of services is only one determining factor of the patient's characteristics, it is significant. Additional concern to AOTA is the clinical categories for patient placement. AOTA feels that they are too broad to determine appropriate therapy needs. Also, co-morbidities are not fully included as factors influencing OT/PT need.

"Additionally, CMS would remove the existing 14-, 30-, 60-, and 90-day PPS assessments and only require the initial and discharge assessments, with significant change assessments if applicable." Currently, a significant change assessment has not been defined and the impact on therapy classification for payment purposes is unclear.

The effect of all of these limitations in the proposed system may seriously restrict, which patients receive therapy and whether they receive the appropriate amount of therapy. Improving the PPS system could have beneficial effects on patients and on practitioners (e.g., fewer productivity pressures) but AOTA does not believe this proposed system has enough safeguards in place for implementation. In particular, RCS-I does not include protections that ensure the OT/PT allotment is used solely to provide therapy services, nor does it ensure that patients receive medically necessary services of the proper type. Rationing may occur, and domination of one discipline in a facility may affect how the OT/PT allotment is apportioned. AOTA is concerned that patient needs will not drive the system after a payment amount or category has been determined."

AOTA is requesting comments online which are due by 5:00 p.m. eastern daylight time on August 25, 2017. AOTA has developed a template letter that can be downloaded from their website and submitted to CMS by the deadline noted above. AOTA encourages you to





## News from the MSOTA Reimbursement Chair Amanda Jordan, OTR/L



customize the letter with your own concerns. Once your comment letter is ready for submission, you may submit electronic comments on this regulation to <http://www.regulations.gov>. within the search bar, enter the Regulation Identifier Number associated with this regulation, 0938-AT17 lick on the "Comment Now" box enter your comments into the comment box by copying and pasting from the document you have drafted in Word or personalized from the AOTA template letter.

### 2018 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule

The July 13, 2017, release of the CY 2018 Medicare Physician Fee Schedule Proposed Rule by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) set forward codes and values for Medicare Part B payments in 2018.

AOTA has been involved in a multi-year process to revise current CPT codes identified by CMS as being potentially "misvalued" and also introducing new codes that more accurately reflect the current practice of occupational therapy and improve reimbursement. The Work Relative Value Units (WRVUs) proposed by CMS provide an overall increase in reimbursement for most of the therapy codes for 2018. In addition, the Practice Expense RVUs for each code were maintained or increased.

In total, 19 codes frequently used by occupational therapists were presented to the American Medical Association (AMA) Health Care Professionals Advisory Committee (HCPAC). In addition, 3 codes describing orthotic and prosthetic services were presented, including a new code (977X1) that replaces the orthotic prosthetic checkout code (97762) describing orthotic and prosthetic subsequent encounters. Of these codes, 9 codes benefited from increases in value and 13 maintained their WRVU values as follows:

97112: Neuromuscular reeducation of movement, balance, coordination, kinesthetic sense, posture, and proprioception, from .45 to .50

97113: Aquatic therapy with therapeutic exercise, from .44 to .48

97116: Gait training, from .40 to .45

97533: Sensory integrative techniques, from .44 to .48

97537: Community/work reintegration, from .45 to .48

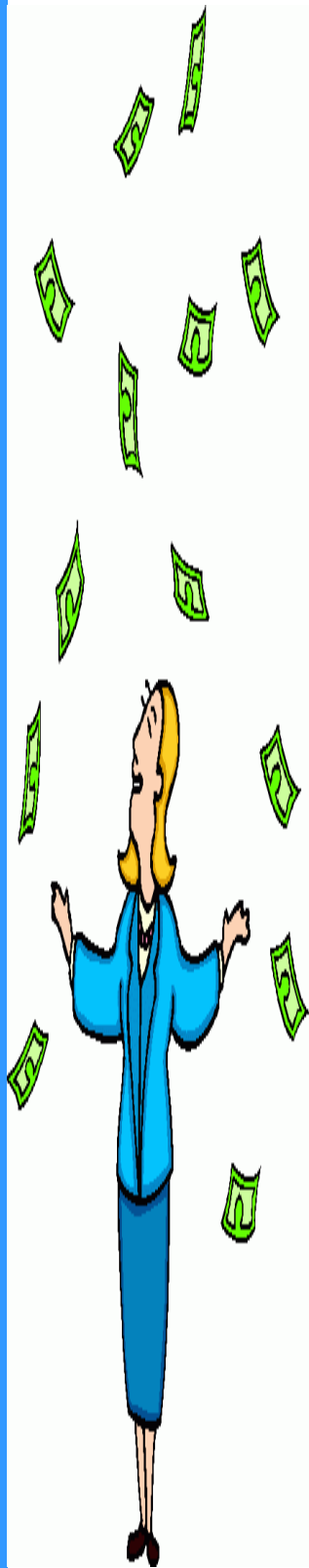
97542: Wheelchair management, from .45 to .48

97760: Orthotic Management and Training, from .45 to .50

97761: Prosthetic Training, from .45 to .50

977X1 (replaces 97762): Orthotic(s)/prosthetic(s) management and/or training subsequent encounter, from .25 (97762) to .48 (977X1)

As always, MSOTA is working closely with AOTA to provide comment and suggestions on all of these issues as well as many others. Your support and input is greatly appreciated. As you can see, our combined efforts have made significant progress in many areas and we are continually striving to protect and promote our profession.



## News from the MSOTA Reimbursement Chair Amanda Jordan, OTR/L



### Advisory Council

Amanda Jordan, OTR/L  
MSOTA Executive Director

As you know, the Mississippi State Board of Health (Board) regulates the occupational therapy profession in the state of Mississippi. This regulation is done with the advice and counsel provided by the Mississippi Advisory Council in Occupational Therapy (Council). The Council consists of 5 members who serve 3-year terms. These members are nominated by their peers. The Board regularly seeks nominations and referrals from the Mississippi Occupational Therapy Association when a position on the Council is being vacated. The current Council members include:

Megan Ladner, OT, MS  
OT Member/Chair (term expires 12/31/17)

Tina Melton, OT  
OT Member/Secretary (term expires 12/31/17)

Scott Cockroft, OT  
OT Member (term expires 12/31/19)

Michelle Pierce, OTA  
OTA Member (term expires 12/31/19)

Rebecca Barry, RDH, Ph.D.  
Public Member (term expires 12/31/19)

The Council meets regularly during the first month of the year. Additional meetings are held when necessary. MSOTA and the Council have developed a good relationship in which we communicate matters directly affecting the OT profession and work together to provide the best and most accurate information possible to the MSDH Board.



## ACOTE Announces New Mandates for both OT and OTA Education

On Monday August 21<sup>st</sup>, ACOTE announced some sweeping changings for the future of OT education at both the OT and OTA levels. The announcement was published as follows.

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At the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education's (ACOTE®) August 3–6, 2017, meeting, two motions were presented regarding the entry-level degrees for the occupational therapist and the occupational therapy assistant. These motions led to the following outcomes.

### Occupational Therapist

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) has mandated that the entry-level degree requirement for the occupational therapist will move to the doctoral level by July 1, 2027. Only entry-level doctoral occupational therapy degree programs will be eligible to receive or maintain ACOTE accreditation status as of July 1, 2027. Further, ACOTE and the AOTA Accreditation Department will develop and implement a plan for this transition so the concerns and needs of all affected stakeholders are addressed to facilitate the smoothest transition possible.

### Occupational Therapy Assistant

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) has mandated that the entry-level degree for the occupational therapy assistant will move to the baccalaureate level by July 1, 2027. Only entry-level baccalaureate occupational therapy assistant degree programs will be eligible to receive or maintain ACOTE accreditation status as of July 1, 2027. Further, ACOTE and the AOTA Accreditation Department will develop and implement a plan for this transition so the concerns and needs of all affected stakeholders are addressed to facilitate the smoothest transition possible.

### Important Notice

ACOTE's mandate and the implementation deadline of July 1, 2027, will only impact occupational therapy programs at the master's degree level and occupational therapy assistant programs at the associate's degree level. This decision will not impact occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants who have received initial certification by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy (NBCOT®).

A representative for ACOTE will discuss the mandate of the entry-level degree for the occupational therapist and the occupational therapy assistant during the Academic Leadership Council (ALC) meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, on Thursday, October 26, 2017. Additionally, ACOTE will work with AOTA to prepare webinars and resource documents to assist programs with the transition in degree programs.

Inquiries may be directed to the AOTA Accreditation Department at [acote-transition@aota.org](mailto:acote-transition@aota.org).  
[Read the mandate on ACOTE's website and find answers to frequently asked questions](#)

## Did You Know?

The following is a nationwide petition which is being developed to oppose the move to BS level OTA education. If you would like to support this movement and add your name to the petition, just send an email with your name, credentials, and place/state of employment to [rasmith@allegany.edu](mailto:rasmith@allegany.edu)

### PETITION TO OPPOSE ACOTE DECISION

We, the undersigned, oppose the recent mandate by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) to move the entry-level educational requirement for the Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) from an associate's degree to a baccalaureate degree for the following reasons:

#### THE PROCESS

**The process by which ACOTE brought forth this mandate is in conflict with the ACOTE Guidelines and Policy Statements VI. K. Statement on Educational Quality.** "ACOTE, the body selected to ensure the quality of occupational therapy education: continues to develop as a decision-making body, accountable to members of the profession and numerous communities of interest." The mandate was made without considering input from OT practitioners, educators, employers, and students, and, in fact, is in direct opposition to the results presented by the Ad Hoc committee appointed by ACOTE in 2013 to study the impact of changing to an entry-level bachelor's degree for the OTA. (See #3 below).

**The process by which ACOTE brought forth this mandate is in conflict with the Policy and Procedures of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Recognition Purposes and Requirements.**

"CHEA recognition of accrediting organizations has three basic purposes:"

Under "To Demonstrate Accountability" are the statements: "Accountability also includes a commitment by the accrediting organization to involve the public in accreditation decision making." and "Accrediting organizations that seek CHEA recognition must demonstrate the quality of their activities and the pertinence and value of their activities to higher education and the public interest". ACOTE did not involve the public in this decision, nor even its own constituents. The mandate came without warning and all decision-making took place behind closed doors and in secrecy. When asked to supply the minutes from the meeting where this decision was made, ACOTE's response was that "because meeting minutes include information regarding the accreditation process, they are not available to the public." There is no evidence that ACOTE has demonstrated the quality of this action to higher education and the public interest. In reality, the decision is detrimental to many higher education institutions. There is no evidence that the decision is in the public interest. According to the report of the Ad Hoc committee appointed by ACOTE in 2013 (See #3 below) this decision is not in the best interests of the public, and especially not to the thousands of people who will be directly or indirectly adversely affected by this action .

**The mandate is in conflict with the American Occupational Therapy Association's (AOTA) Policy and Procedures Manual 2017.**



*Justice will not be served until those who are unaffected are as outraged as those who are.*

*-Benjamin Franklin*



## Petiton, continued

-ng shall be published in an official publication of the Association at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting. The agenda shall contain the meeting starting time and location (including the address with building and room) as well as a statement indicating that it is an open meeting." There was no notice of the mandate on the agenda for an open meeting. This mandate had to be approved by the Board of Directors of AOTA, as ACOTE is a standing committee of AOTA, and as such, cannot make decisions independently of AOTA. The following links all list the organization as AOTA, ACOTE:

- 1) NACIQI Archive of Meetings Meeting Agenda June 2017, which states specifically that ACOTE is a standing committee of AOTA <https://opeweb.ed.gov/aslweb/finalstaffreports.cfm>
- 2) Agenda from June 2017 meeting of National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) <https://sites.ed.gov/naciqi/files/2017/06/NACIQI-June-2017-Agenda.pdf>
- 3) *Federal Register: The Daily Journal of the United States Government*. March 2012 <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2012/03/30/2012-7725/national-advisory-committee-on-institutional-quality-and-integrity-naciqi>
- 4) NACIQI Meeting Transcript June 2017 <https://sites.ed.gov/naciqi/files/2017/07/NACIQI-Transcripts-062117-Bookmarks1.pdf>
- 5) CHEA Directory of Programmatic Accrediting Organizations <http://www.chea.org/serfiles/Recognition/directory-CHEA-recognized-orgs.pdf>

**Below is the email that was sent by the AOTA Board of Directors on August 22, 2017, in which they take no responsibility for the mandate:**

### A message from AOTA's Board of Directors:

Yesterday you received an email from The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) about its mandate to move the entry-level degree for the occupational therapist to the doctoral level, and the entry-level degree for the occupational therapy assistant to the baccalaureate level, by 2027. Only students graduating after July 1, 2027, will be affected by this change.

This action comes after several years of dialogue within the community, careful study, and consideration of important trends affecting our profession and its future. The AOTA Board of Directors applaud the Council for the thoughtful approach they took to their deliberations to identify the optimal entry level of education for ethical, accountable, and efficient practice to meet society's occupational needs. August 22, 2017

"POLICY D.4 Subject: Diverse and Inclusive Membership

PURPOSE: To state the Association's position that a diverse and inclusive membership is promoted and encouraged in Association membership, activities, documentation, publications, and presentations sponsored by the Association." This mandate will directly limit diversity in the profession by **discriminating against** and **denying access** to education for those of lower socioeconomic status, and racial and ethnic minorities.





### Petition , continued

which provide membership with adequate information to assist Representatives in making informed decisions.

#### IT SHALL BE THE POLICY OF THE ASSOCIATION THAT:

All items for Assembly action, including new business, shall be posted to the Association Web site. These items may include, but not be limited to, proposed motions; previously referred motions; Commission or Committee items for action; and proposed policies.

Deadlines for receipt of proposed motions and a motion review process shall be completed by the Agenda Chairperson in accordance with established procedures.

Proposed motions from members and any items for action received prior to established editorial deadlines shall be published in an official publication.

The publication shall include contact information for all Representatives and a method of response with adequate space for member comment.” There was no notice to members of this item of business, and no opportunity for members to comment.

#### **The notice from ACOTE regarding the mandate provides no evidence or rationale for the decision.**

An Ad Hoc Committee was appointed in 2013 to “investigate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of changing the occupational therapy assistant entry level degree from the current associate degree to either:

Elevate the entry level degree exclusively to the bachelor’s degree, or

Include both the associate degree and bachelor’s degree as options for OTA education.” (American Occupational Therapy Association Ad Hoc Committee to OTA Entry-Level-Degree Requirements. Final Report to the Representative Assembly. September 26, 2014)

The Key Recommendations of that committee follow:

Recommendation 1: Following a thorough review of the issues and stakeholder feedback, the Committee is recommending that the entry-level degree requirement for the occupational therapy assistant remain the associate’s degree at this time. The Committee recognized that there are a number of factors and key data supporting a move to the bachelor’s degree including expanded breadth of OTA practice, increased content requirements, and emerging practice models. However, the Committee noted that there was not sufficient evidence that the institutions sponsoring the existing OTA programs would be able to successfully make the transition at this time and if the key stakeholders (e.g, students, higher education providers, clinical providers, etc.) can afford the associated increased costs.

Recommendation 2: The Committee is recommending that there be only one entry-level degree as a pre-requisite for the single national certification exam for the occupational therapy assistant.

Recommendation 3: The Committee is recommending that the Association develop and implement a plan in the next 2 years that articulates clearly defined strategies to ensure that the profession is prepared to succeed if the profession should choose to move to a bachelor’s requirement for the entry-level degree for the occupational therapy assistant. This plan should at a minimum address the following:

- Expectations of practice for an OTA in the next decade,
- Impact of any changes in entry-level degree requirements for the OT (e.g., doctoral requirement) on OTA practice
- Growth in content to address changes in practice,
- Readiness of host institutions to support a transition to the bachelor’s requirement,



### Petition, continued

- Faculty workforce including occupational therapy assistants with postbaccalaureate degrees (Note: Accreditation typically requires faculty to have a least one degree higher than the degree granted by the program)
- Impact of regulatory changes associated with the Affordable Care Act and impact on reimbursement, and
- The potential impact of increased costs on key stakeholders (i.e. students, employers, etc.) (American Occupational Therapy Association Ad Hoc Committee to OTA Entry-Level-Degree Requirements. Final Report to the Representative Assembly. September 26, 2014)

ACOTE did not follow the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee that they themselves appointed. The information gathered by the committee was overwhelmingly against making the change, and nothing has been demonstrated by ACOTE in the 3 years since the final report was submitted that supports this sudden decision.

### THE DECISION

#### **Education costs will affect student accessibility to the profession.**

A large number of students who enter OTA programs are nontraditional students seeking a second career or returning to the work force after having a family. This is particularly true in rural areas. The move to a B.S. degree will keep many very excellent therapy assistants out of the profession. Many of them are not in a financial or life situation to be able to afford the additional cost in money and time to pursue a bachelor's degree.

#### **Salaries will not rise to offset the educational costs.**

Students coming out of B.S. programs will have greater student loan debt, but can expect no increase in salaries to help them pay off their educational loans.

#### **The mandate will force the closing of a large number of OTA programs in community colleges.**

Only 20 of the 50 states have provisions for community colleges to confer bachelor's degrees. The closure of these programs will have a huge economic impact, particularly on small, rural colleges. There will cause a ripple effect as faculty members lose jobs, and colleges lose enrollment and the associated revenue.

**Current OTA programs provide a well-rounded, skill-based education for OTAs.** Adding another two years to the curriculum will likely involve adding more general education/liberal arts courses, adding little value to the OTA degree.

#### **Faculty in B.S. programs will need to have a minimum of a master's degree.**

This will eliminate hundreds of excellent, experienced, skilled OTAs who are currently teaching in OTA programs across the country. In addition, many OTA programs are already experiencing difficulty filling faculty positions, and this mandate will only exacerbate the problem.

#### **Associate degree-prepared OTAs may not be allowed to supervise bachelor's level students on fieldwork.**

This could be a potential problem for fieldwork placement and decrease already dwindling fieldwork sites for many programs.

**This mandate discriminates against potential students of lower socioeconomic status, and racial and ethnic minorities who may not have the resources to complete a bachelor's program.** This is a violation of the AOTA Code of Ethics Principle 4 Social Justice: Justice requires the impartial consideration and consistent following of rules to generate unbiased decisions and promote fairness. As occupational therapy personnel, we work to uphold a society in which all individuals have an equitable opportunity to achieve occupational engagement as an essential component of their life.



### Petition, continued

D. Advocate for changes to systems and policies that are discriminatory or unfairly limit or prevent access to occupational therapy services. (This should include access to education in the profession).

**With completion rates for college decreasing and student loan debt increasing, it is fiscally irresponsible to increase the educational requirements for OTAs.**

For some time, the federal government has been demanding that colleges and universities implement strategies to increasing completion rates. Completion rates for bachelor's degrees at U.S. degree-granting institutions are currently averaging 59% (<https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=40>). The default rate for Federal Student loans is currently 11.3%. Federal Student loan interest rates increased by almost a full percentage point beginning July 1, 2017. (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/05/12/your-money/stafford-student-loan-rates.html?mcubz=3>). Mandating a bachelor's degree for OTAs will double the amount of education, and subsequently double the amount of debt required to complete the degree. This decision is in direct opposition to demands being made by the United States Department of Education (USDE.)

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**Occupational therapy assistants are SECOND on the list of Fastest Growing Occupations, 2014-2024, published by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t05.htm>)**

Changing the educational requirements for OTAs in the face of this evidence of the demands in the profession is foolish.

**Clients in underserved areas will suffer from the lack of trained OTA professionals.**

There will be less OTAs to provide services to the very neediest people. With approximately 10,000 baby boomers turning 65 every day (<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2010/12/29/baby-boomers-retire/>) and autism spectrum disorder appearing in 1 in 68 births (<http://www.autism-society.org/what-is/facts-and-statistics/>), the OTA is an integral part of the health care delivery system. This is not the time to decrease the number of OTA professionals.

The names below represent all those who have reviewed and are in agreement with this petition. We request a response in a timely manner, and if possible, the opportunity to appear before the Council and be heard. If this matter cannot be resolved to our satisfaction, then we will have no option but to file complaints with the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and the United States Department of Education (USDE). We are also prepared to pursue legal action, if necessary.



## Legislative Update

MSOTA Legislative Day is scheduled for February 1, 2018 at the Mississippi State Capitol section B and D. We're planning to present evidenced based research and conduct screens this year. Next session will also be extremely important for telehealth so make plans to attend now!

Glenda Hux, OT  
MSOTA President  
Mississippi Occupational Therapy  
Association

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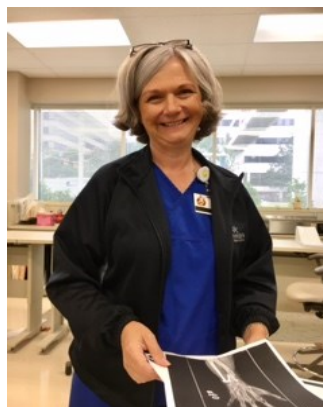
## The MSOTA Spotlight is on...

### Susan Cobb

Susan was born and raised in Jackson and graduated from LSU School of Occupational Therapy. She began practicing in Mississippi in 1980 and worked on the Occupational Therapy Practice Act to assist MSOTA in obtaining licensure in 1989. She was honored to be provided the license #0001. She worked at Forest General Hospital, University of Alabama in Birmingham (UAB), University of Mississippi Medical Center and at St. Dominic's Hand Management Center. The flexibility of the profession served her and her family well as she was able to work part time and raise three children. The love of healthcare was instilled in her by her parents and she is grateful for the opportunities she has had to learn and grow with excellent professional mentors.

She became interested in Occupational Therapy while volunteering in high school at UMMC with Rosemary Tennant, OTR. The playroom was managed by the OT department and she was employed during summers as an OT aid. When Susan began her career in Mississippi there were less than fifty OTs in this state. She became interested in Hand Therapy in 1982 at UMMC and felt she had found her niche. Susan was one of the first OTs to become a Certified Hand Therapist in Mississippi. The splinting arena has always been one of her favorites because "it incorporates creativity with academic knowledge". She also states that "the true joy of this profession comes with returning individuals to their daily activities".

When Susan is not at work she can be found oil painting outside, camping with her husband Dave, digging in her flower beds, hiking in National Parks and visiting her family and friends. The profession has been rewarding and a perfect fit for her. "I think it is spectacular that so many young people are now familiar with Occupational Therapy and are pursuing the path to eventually replace me at my job". Her OT advice is "it is a great day to be an occupational therapist, and treat each patient with compassion and empathy."







## New Editions



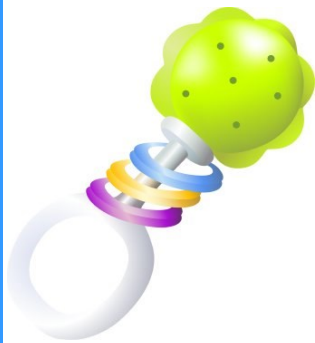
Patrick Graham Wood

6lbs 8 oz

19.5 inches

April 25, 2017 at 1:04 PM

Welcomed by Kyle and Megan Wood and big sister Catherine. Megan is our website administrator and a member of our PR committee.



Theolyn Bradley Hopper

8 lbs

20 inches

Welcomed by Jason and Becky Hopper. Becky is on our membership committee.



Beau Babington Wilson

June 26, 2017

7 lbs 10 ounces

21 inches long

Welcomed by Brett and Jasmine Wilson and big brother, Gray. Jasmine is our PR Chairperson.

## MSOTA DISTRICT NEWS

### NORTHERN DISTRICT NEWS

Hi MSOTA members. I am Brandi Peters the northern district chair. I am excited to be back. I represented the northern district several years ago but when I entered the Belmont University bridge program in 2015 I had to relinquish my duties due to limited time. I knew my time would be consumed with a family, full-time job and going to school full time. I am excited to be back. I want to tell you a little about myself. First off, I am married to my wonderful and supportive husband of 18 years. We have two children ages 19 and 13. Anna Brooke is my oldest who just got accepted to nursing school, and yes I am a very proud mom. My son, Jaden will be finishing up his last year in junior high and he is so laid back, which was great with having a mom in school that stressed often.

I graduated Itawamba Community College in 2010 with my associates degree as an Occupational Therapy Assistant. I've worked the last 6 years at North Mississippi Medical Center in the hand clinic. I love my job and with much encouragement I decided to do the bridge from COTA to MSOT program in Nashville, TN. God has perfect timing as always. My supervising OT, which was in the hand clinic for 23 years was promoted to our Rehab Director soon after I was accepted to the program. To make a long story short, I had several OT's in the building helping me, supporting me, and when I went on clinicals they all stepped in to take up my slack. I am very blessed with an awesome support system at home and at work. I completed my last clinical rotation on July 14, 2017 and will graduate on August 11, 2017.

In COTA school being a part of your state and national organization was deeply imbed in our curriculum. I truly believe it was discussed daily. That was over seven years ago, I continue to feel like it is very important to be a part and serve my community. Now that school is behind me I can give MSOTA the attention it deserves. I am excited to bring more continuing education to the area, events promoting the profession and organization, and encourage others to also be apart of such a great organization that supports us. I would love to get to know more of the members and have a better understanding of what each of you vision for our district. Feel free to contact me anytime. My cell number is 662-255-2780 and my email is [brandip2010@gmail.com](mailto:brandip2010@gmail.com). I wish to truly thank you all for allowing me to serve you once again.

### CENTRAL DISTRICT

The Central District hosted a CEU event on April 20, 2017, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the UMMC School of Health Related Professions. This event consisted of a one-hour poster session presented by the OT3's. Following the poster presentation, Robin Davis, MS, OTR/L, presented a one-hour lecture on 2017 Fieldwork Educator Updates. This event hosted over 32 attendees. This was the second year that the Central District hosted an "after work" event during the week. With such a good response, we hope to offer more of these type events in the future. Many thanks to our members for their support and input!

"Tell me and I forget.

Teach me and I remember.

Involve me and I learn. "

-Benjamin Franklin



## MSOTA DISTRICT NEWS

### COASTAL DISTRICT NEWS

The Coastal District had a busy Spring. We hosted a meeting in honor of OT Month at the El Saltillo's Restaurant in Ocean Springs, MS, on Thursday, April 27, 201, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. Ashley Campbell, PT, and Clinical Director from Encore Rehabilitation Neurosciences Center, educated us about Benign Paroxysmal Positional Vertigo or "BPPV". We also had fun learning how to use the new website mso-ta.membersclicks.net and networking with our fellow, primarily Jackson County therapists. We are now looking forward to planning our Fall agenda including a Fall Mini Conference.

Julie LeBlanc, MS, OTR/L  
MSOTA Coastal District Chair  
MSOTA Vice President

### DELTA DISTRICT NEWS

Brad has nothing to report.

### SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT NEWS

Jessica has nothing to report.

### MERIDIAN DISTRICT NEWS

Greetings from the Meridian District. I just wanted to let members know that we are planning a Mini Conference for the fall. Penny Rogers OTR/L will speak Saturday September 30, 2017 in Fitness Center Auditorium at Anderson Regional Medical Center here in Meridian. Time will be from 8:30- 11:30 .The topic will be on Ergonomics. The title is being finalized and we will get that information out soon.

Also, I am planning a short one to one and one half hour Upper Extremity anatomy reviews which will cover different segments of the Upper Extremity at each gathering. I plan to offer these at District meetings every 2-3 months. I am working on securing a venue and dates for these meetings. For more information, please contact me at 601-553-6718 or email me at Shennings1@comcast.net. I look forward to seeing you.

Scott White OTR/L, CSCS ,CHT



**I can do things you  
cannot, you can do  
things I cannot; to-  
gether we can do  
great things.**

**-Mother Teresa**

## SCHOOL NEWS

### Holmes Community College

The Holmes Community College OTA program was excited to host the MSOTA 5K event in April on our Ridgeland campus. The OTA students volunteered on this date and enjoyed the opportunity to network with OT professionals across the state! The students recently completed a pediatric day camp for the children at Warren-Yazoo Mental Health (WYMH) on the Yazoo campus. The OTA students led groups of children ranging from ages 5-17 daily in the month of June.

During the camp, the OTA students provided the children with a multitude of activities to address their psychosocial needs, including teamwork skills, communication skills and coping skills. In collaboration with the WYMH staff, Holmes' OTA students also developed groups aimed to increase the participants' success in the community and at home. The students utilized theoretical basis and practical application of group intervention under the direction of their OTA instructors, Jason Miles and Kana Williams.

The program has accepted 20 students for the Fall 2017 cohort. There are currently 14 students in their second year and will begin fieldwork experiences soon. The OTA faculty is very excited about the classes and is eager to begin the fall semester. The OTA faculty also would like to say a special "thank you" to the clinical instructors for providing their expertise and time.

**Kana Ledbetter Williams, COTA/L**



### Ittawamba Community College

Ittawamba Community College is gearing up for the fall semester. We selected 14 students from an applicant pool of approximately 150 to enter the program this fall. A pinning ceremony was held in May to celebrate the accomplishments of our 2017 graduates. All of these graduates have taken and passed the NBCOT exam on their first attempt and so far 92% have secured jobs.

This past year students had the opportunity to participate in a ton of community service events including Angel's Pageant, A Night to Shine, Ronald McDonald House, Alzheimer's Walk, Special Olympics and Camp Tik-a-witha. These were all wonderful experiences for our students and we are looking forward to being able to serve again this school year.

ICC hosted a fall and spring pediatric forum provided by Marcia Washington. These sessions were attended by approximately 30 pediatric practitioners. We have partnered with Marcia for the past 2 years and plan to continue this bi-annual event.

As always we can't say enough about how much we appreciate all of our amazing fieldwork educators. It is your expertise and willingness to take time to invest in our students and further their learning experience that truly allows them to progress from student to OT practitioner.

Again, we are looking forward to a great year!

Dee Dee and Shannon

## SCHOOL NEWS Continued

### Pearl River Community College

Pearl River Community College sophomores enjoyed a week at Civitan Camp in Wiggins, MS in late July helping to provide a memorable and enriching week for adults with developmental disabilities. These students will be starting Level I fieldwork in the fall semester. Much appreciation to all of our fieldwork educators!!



The program has accepted a new class of freshmen who are bringing their enthusiasm and excitement about Occupational Therapy.



### University of Mississippi Medical Center

The UMMC MOT program accepted its final master's class this summer and is in the process of transitioning to an entry-level doctorate degree. The OT Department plans to enroll its first entry-level doctoral (OTD) students in summer 2018. As part of the typical accreditation process for a transitioning program, UMMC has submitted a candidacy application to ACOTE for review and approval. This is a detailed plan for implementing the OTD program. We expect to have a response on this review by the first of the year. Upon receiving candidacy status, we will be poised to officially accept our first OTD class in summer 2018.

Our program had begun this move prior to the August mandate requiring all entry-level OT programs to transition to a doctorate degree. Our faculty were very proactive and forward thinking in this transition planning. Now, we are very well poised to be among the first group of OT programs in the nation making this change. There is a great deal of information on our website regarding the rationale for our transition decision along with the planned UMMC OTD curriculum. We invite you to visit our site and learn more about our new degree program at: <https://www.umc.edu/shrp/Programs/Doctor%20of%20Occupational%20Therapy/Doctor%20of%20Occupational%20Therapy.html> .



## SCHOOL NEWS Continued

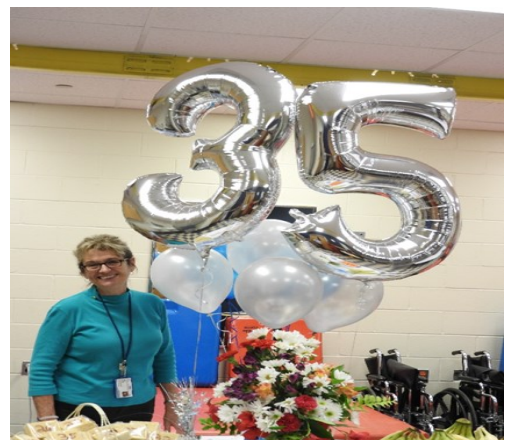
### University of Mississippi Medical Center

A heartfelt thanks to all of our fieldwork educators who have supported us through the years. We look forward to continuing to partner with you through fieldwork education. This degree will not only allow us to maintain our existing fieldwork relationships but also provide an opportunity to further advance our partnerships through a third long term specialty internship both in traditional and non-traditional settings. We look forward to sharing more information with you on our new program in the upcoming months.



UMMC OT Department faculty, staff and students took a break from classes to enjoy the recent solar eclipse.

August 20, 2017 marked 35 years of continuous service at the University of Mississippi Medical center for a local OT icon – Sandy Lowman. Sandy has been the program administrator taking care of many OT faculty and countless students through the years. The UMMC OT faculty threw Sandy a surprise party to recognize her years of service. The party theme was 35 – where everything came in 35s – 35 petite fours – a dessert fave, 35 of her favorite fruits, 35 packs of crackers – a common afternoon snack, 35 footsteps taped to the floor with adjectives describing her wonderful personality, and 35 of her most favorite sayings around the office. While 35 was the number of the day, Sandy reminded us that she had been at UMMC once her most recent employment – so her total years of service to UMMC is 40!



## Administrative News!!

### New MSOTA Board Member

During our annual membership meeting in March, Erica Reeves was elected as Secretary/Treasurer Elect to the MSOTA Board. She will serve one year in training before assuming the reigns of Secretary/Treasurer from Meagen Mallett in February of 2018.

Erica is an occupational therapist and certified hand therapist at St. Dominic's Outpatient Rehabilitation and Hand Management Center in Jackson, MS. Having a mother who is also an occupational therapist, she grew up with a love for the field and pursued a career in OT after high school. Erica started work at St. Dominic's Inpatient Rehabilitation after graduating from UMMC's Occupational Therapy program with her Masters degree in May of 2011. With a desire to then pursue a specialty in hands, she started work at the Hand Management Center in the spring of 2013. Once eligible per requirements, she received her certification in hand therapy in November of 2016. Erica lives in Jackson, MS with her husband, Conner Reeves, and their cat and dog. They are expecting their first child in December of 2017.





## CONTACT US

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## MSOTA WEBSITE

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP ONLINE!

[mississippiota.org](http://mississippiota.org)

Can we make an up-  
dated one of these??  
Those events are last  
years but I like this  
graphic as it showcases  
the website. What do  
you think?