Reflection

Reflect on your practice or professional work activities. The following questions may guide your reflection.

How is my practice, scope of work, or work environment changing related to . . .

- Different populations/clients/consumers/employees/students?
  
  From a small tight-knit, privately owned outpatient practice to Backus Outpatient Care Center I have been exposed to opposite ends of the spectrum with regard to population diversity – especially in terms of socioeconomic class. However, I have minimal experience at a multitude of different settings and would like to experience an acute setting such as a hospital. Also, I intend to strengthen my experience with those who are effected neurologically.

- New technology or information systems?
  
  Different facilities place varying amounts of importance on productivity. Some practices, of which I am largely unfamiliar, have “streamlined” note taking, by reducing the human aspect of note taking. Minimizing the need for typing was achieved by providing options to fit treatment into, a task that only takes a few clicks of the mouse to complete a note. I will encounter a learning curve in such a facility, being as my experience has been with facilities that place importance on detailed and personal notes for each patient.

- New standards or requirements (internal and external)?
  
  While physical therapists now graduate with a doctorate degree and can diagnose conditions, the practice of occupational therapy will probably (if it hasn’t already) make an attempt to attain the same level of professional accreditation. Regardless of this fact, I plan to seriously consider extending my education if the opportunity presents itself in a manageable fashion (family, moving, finances, etc.).

- Changing work demands and work systems?
  
  The demands of work vary from facility to facility. These demands, whatever they may be, are required of all employees. For example, at my second Level II
FW, each therapist (OT, PT, SLP) was required to complete a predetermined number of anonymous reviews of their coworkers with a focus on note completion, clarity, effectiveness, validity of their choices, and many other criteria. This type of process does not occur at all locations, but at this particular one, it was required. However, to complete all job requirements is merely to be an “average” employee – but when one makes accomplishments that are related to the field and are not required by work, to me that is being an effective OT. To go above and beyond. So my goal is to go above and beyond

• Changes in the profession?

I plan to continue my membership with AOTA to maintain my connection with the national level of support for the practice of occupational therapy. AOTA acts as a governing body for occupational therapy, especially through the publication of the Practice Framework, a piece of literature that I based my entire academic and practical education. Through the organization’s future revision of this document and its Centennial Vision, I will stay up to date with the latest changes, additions, and news connected to occupational therapy.

• Changes in the community?

Technology has been a growing influence on all age groups of the community. Not only do the young children grow up with smart phones and easy access to computers in many communities, the daily lives of older generations are becoming permeated by technology. Case in point: my grandmother can text, sends photos, and prints photos at the local pharmacy through her phone. She may be an exception to her age bracket, but her ability highlights the power of technology. I can draw off of my knowledge of technology to make recommendations about potentially helpful apps and other pieces of technology to my clients (of all ages). This can be one of many secondary benefits of which a client is provided when working with me professionally.

• Changes in client or consumer expectations?

The client should expect the therapist (me in this case) to give 110% with treatment and related experiences unrequired by job demands. Helping research and fill out financial aid assistance request forms for a man with no use of his upper extremities is an example. It is something that has the power to help in the future. When asked to describe a diagnosis or patient’s condition, a patient of mine should expect me to assume a viewpoint that is critical and unsatisfied with the norm. Performing tasks relatively similar to the above example is something that I’d like to do with every patient and similar effort should be expected when needed.
SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET (2)

Identifying Areas for Professional Development

You can identify learning needs by assessing the level of congruence between your own knowledge, skills, and attitudes and those required by the various responsibilities and roles you hold—or strive to hold. The following questions may guide your exploration of possible growth areas.

Related to Current Practice

- What is going on within my practice or work responsibilities that indicate a need for improvement?

  My knowledge about neurological rehabilitation in general seems to be weak. I have been able to participate in the rehab process with many people who have had prior CVAs or SCIs. I just feel that I am not confident or clear on the specifics and reasoning behind some methods of treatment.

- What can be changed or improved?

  I can do research and reading on this area of occupational therapy (neuro rehab), as it does highly interest me. It is an amazing experience to be with a patient when that person recovers a new movement for the first time in years. I want to be well versed in that area of OT in the event that my job placement sees such patients.

- What changes in the external environment suggest the need for new learning?

  Now that my level two fieldwork has ended, I am eager to be hired somewhere and get a start on my career. Before that happens, I need to take a review course for the NBCOT exam, take the test and pass it, and then get a job. New learning is inherent in my current plan and will ultimately improve my practice.

Related to Future Goals

- What are new opportunities and potential areas for growth?

  New opportunities may come to light with the future advent of the doctoral status of the new graduate coming out of school. The opportunity to further my formal education and attain a doctoral degree is a goal for me.

- What are my career goals?
My career goals are written in pencil as they are likely to change as I become involved in a new job and experience new things in the professional journey on which I am about to embark. As of now, I plan to accomplish the following items during my career:

- Continually build upon my experience and knowledge in regard to neurological rehabilitation. It is a personal area of interest and I at some point I would like to be known for providing excellent neurological rehabilitation.

- Become certified in hand therapy (CHT) because, again, hands interest me and their complexity poses a challenge for any therapist providing rehabilitation.

- Assume a role of importance in the setting in which I work. Initially, this goal was “to open a private outpatient rehab practice”. This is now changed now that I have seen the growing expansion of hospitals (Middlesex, Yale, and Hartford Healthcare) and their satellite facilities cropping up all over the place. I just think that as time goes on, it will become more and more difficult for the “little guy” to succeed.

- In what areas of practice or the profession would I like to achieve excellence?

  - Knowledge of hands and provision of hand rehabilitation (CHT)
  
  - Knowledge of the neurological system and the provision of neurological rehabilitation

  - General client-therapist rapport. Trust goes a long way in this unique relationship.

  - I have a lot of experience with shoulders thus far and would like to continue broadening my knowledge of shoulder injuries, conditions, and structure.

  - My “bag of tricks” needs to get bigger and I need to create a document to help me with accomplishing this. I am pretty good at coming up with something therapeutic quickly as well as modifying a task to provide a good challenge, but I need to begin to keep track of new ideas and activities that I use often.
SELF-ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET (3)

Further Reflection

- *What do I want or need to do that would lead to my career goals?*

  I need to gain experience with hand rehabilitation and with neuro rehabilitation. I would love to work at a rehab facility and be able to treat/co-treat these individuals. If I cannot find a place of employment that can provide me with this criteria, then I will have to work and gain as much general experience as I can for a while and then try to find a place of employment that will satisfy my needs.

  I also need to research the criteria one must have to apply for the CHT certification test. My knowledge is limited in this area and I know that one must possess a minimum number of years of OT experience and a minimum number of experiential hours with hand related rehab. I also know that the passing rate for the CHT test is very low (in the 60s). So light studying over a long period of time is essential in obtaining that goal.

- *What do I want or need to do to realize my potential for growth?*

  I need to set my goals high. I believe that when I am presented with a particularly challenging goal or situation, then my competitive nature becomes initiated and I strive for success. Becoming a CHT and striving for excellence in neuro rehab are both pretty high goals in my perspective.

- *What do I need to do or learn to provide better intervention for my clients?*

  In terms of outpatient rehabilitation, my experience has shown me that a majority of clients want to know what is going on with their bodies. Becoming familiar with the general healing process of muscles, tendons, ligaments helps me understand why certain protocols are followed as well as the reason behind the presence of certain symptoms. I say this in light of an enlightening power point that I read through in its entirety. It went through each step of the healing process and highlighted facts like it takes up to a full year before soft tissue completely heals and the fact that some amount of inflammation is present up to a year post injury as well. I strongly believe that it is important for me to be able to reiterate similar information to the one who is actually going through the healing process to help that individual relate to me and the tasks I will ask him/her to perform.

  At this point in time, this is one of the pieces of literature that I will read through multiple times so the information sticks permanently. It is such good *basic knowledge* review and it can be boiled down to simplistic terms in order for the information to be passed on to the client.
AOTA Professional Development Tool (PDT)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN WORKSHEET (4)

Competencies

Using the self-assessment process, identify specific competencies to guide your professional growth. Refer to the areas in the Standards for Continuing Competence as a framework. Only write competencies for the Standards that apply.

- What **knowledge** do I need?

  - hand anatomy and kinesiology
  - neurological system anatomy
  - current surgical techniques and their reasoning
  - choices not to operate (on hands) and their reasoning and prognosis
  - rehabilitation processes for hand rehab and neuro rehab
  - custom upper extremity and hand orthotics
  - Improve my understanding of the shoulder girdle

- How will I apply **critical reasoning** in my practice?

  - Plan ahead in all aspects of my professional life. This includes attending CE courses, taking a look at upcoming patients (if possible at my future employment setting), planning vacation days, figuring out financial planning to ensure savings for my and my family’s future. Having a plan makes things run smoothly and leaves less variables to chance.

  - Make a strong effort to look at each and every patient critically. Even if a person comes in with a diagnosis of carpal tunnel syndrome and they present with all the common symptoms, it is important to look seriously, clinically, and critically at the person and seek out and analyze *all* of their symptoms.

  - Make sure therapeutic procedures are based in function.

  - Self-critique, but follow it up with tangible changes that will help make my practice better.

- What **interpersonal abilities** do I need?
When meeting a patient or beginning to treat, consider a person’s culture, ethnicity, knowledge level, socioeconomic status, mental health, and mood. People are different: they think different, they act different, and they have different norms.

Remember to be aware of when a patient is working with other disciplines and the goals associated with the other treatments that patient is receiving.

Give feedback. Make progress known to the patient!

Make treatment client centered. Even if it is conversation about something of interest to the client.

Will I need to develop particular performance skills?

- Always base the therapeutic task in function…or at least make it related to function (for a functional purpose).

- Review past notes on each patient. Progress details can get lost in the daily shuffle. Remember to check back on a patient’s recent progress/digression to keep therapy current and exciting.

What ethical reasoning is needed?

- Always be reasonable when deciding on whether or not to continue to provide a client with occupational therapy. If a client has plateaued or digressed, their continuance with therapy needs to be reevaluated.

- Ensure that every piece of advice given to a client is backed by evidence.

- Ensure the client’s preferred level of privacy is maintained each session.