

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Rick Wickstrom, PT, DPT, CPE, CME

The APTA Combined Sections Meeting in San Diego was a landmark event for our Occupational Health Special Interest Group (OHSIG). We kicked off CSM with a OHSIG leadership strategy meeting on Wednesday afternoon. The leaders who attended in person displayed their OHSIG branded SWAG by modeling OHSIG letters, as shown in **Figure 1** that follows. Attending educational sessions, posters presentations, and networking events without any mask constraints was a welcome return to normalcy that was fueled by the boundless energy of DPT students who represent the future of our profession.

Perspectives about “Navigating a Rewarding Career Path in Occupational Health” were shared by 4 lead authors of monographs in ISC Courses required to complete the Occupational Health Practitioner Certificate:

- Joshua Prall, PT, DPT, EdD led off by describing his path to workplace services that is relevant to the content of our monograph, *Total Worker Health: Protection and Promotion Programs*. While at CSM, Josh also made a platform presentation about a survey he led to determine recommended competencies for occupational health practice in entry-level DPT education. This outstanding young professional also serves as our OHSIG Research Committee Vice Chair!
- Leslie Pickett, PT, DPT batted second when describing her path to develop expertise relevant to the monograph, *Ergonomics for General Industry, Office, and Healthcare*. Initially, Leslie was recruited to serve on the Steering Committee for the OHSIG Occupational Health Practitioner Certificate Program. She contributed so much expertise and vision about best practice in Ergonomics that we promoted her to the lead author role. We look forward to having Leslie continue to serve the OHSIG as a mentor for a peer-reviewed capstone project with an Ergonomics focus to achieve the OHP.
- Wayne Macmasters, PT, DPT batted third in describing his amazing career as a private practice owner with a career niche relevant to the monograph, *Functional Capacity Evaluation and Disability Determination*. Wayne and his author team established new guidance for FCE examiners on several topic areas such as heart rate reserve methodology, exercise testing, test performance validity assessment, and pain classification. Wayne praised my “hypervigilant” efforts to complete our OHP certificate courses, which communicated forgiveness for my setting such a high bar of content expectations for the FCE monograph team.
- Katie McBee, PT, DPT batted clean-up in describing her amazing career that led to integrating important concepts of pain neuroscience to the content of the monograph, *Work Rehabilitation: Managing Prolonged Episodes of Care*. Katie’s presentation concluded with an inspirational message about the importance of establishing a therapeutic alliance as a primary

Figure 1. Leaders (from left to right) include Michelle Despres, Rick Wickstrom, Marc Campo, Corey Blickenstaff, Tyrees Marcy, and Steve Allison



responsibility when working with persons burdened with chronic pain or other psychosocial risk factors that necessitate a psychologically-informed approach to care.

We capped off the OHSIG interactive educational session with a brief awards presentation for 8 of the 13 OHSIG members in attendance who joined the first cohort to complete the Occupational Health Practitioner Certificate. These “astronauts” in occupational health are shown in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3**. As I reflect back on our path for this initiative, I am mindful of a recent article in the December 2022 issue of *JOSPT* titled, *Beginning with the End in Mind: Implementing Backward Design to Improve Sports Injury Rehabilitation Practices*. The backward design process recommended for sports therapy begins with defining the “return-to-performance” goal. This charge is similar to a key CPG recommendation from the August 2021 *JOSPT* article, *Clinical Guidance to Optimize Work Participation After Injury or Illness: The Role of Physical Therapists*. It states that “Physical therapists should document essential functions and exertional job demand information as part of examination to develop a RTW prognosis and plan of care, and to guide RTW decision making.”

In a more general sense, OHSIG leaders began our journey to complete the OHP Certificate Program in 2023 with a backward design in mind to approve occupational health practices from hire to retire. We aligned this ambitious initiative with AOPT’s Positioning and Public Awareness goal to “Position members as experts in managing movement and functional performance.” When the COVID-19 pandemic shut down PT practice in the Spring of 2020, OHSIG leaders continued to mobilize. We benchmarked against other successful certificate programs in APTA academies and applied for AOPT Innovative Funds to support our proposed OHP Program. We formed our OHP Steering Committee who proceeded to outline author content expectations. The 6 author teams we selected then proceeded to author the monographs for

our two independent study courses. Author teams were challenged to translate relevant evidence to practice from our CPG published in August 2021 titled, *Clinical Guidance to Optimize Work Participation After Injury or Illness*.

Our first action after receiving an innovative fund award by the AOPT Board in July 2021 was to contract with Karen Snowden as our OHP program consultant. Karen Snowden has served as the Program Manager for the successful CAPP Program in the Academy of Pelvic Health since its inception. Her years of experience with this certificate program greatly expedited our volunteer efforts. Our 1st Step ISC 32.4 was released in January 2022 titled, *Bridging the Gap Between the Workplace and the Therapy Clinic*. Our 2nd Step ISC 32.5 was released in September 2022 titled, *Advanced Therapy Programs in Occupational Health*. Our

3rd step 32.W3 capstone webinar was released in January 2023 and is titled, *Facilitating Therapy Services for Total Worker Health*. Physical therapists and occupational therapists who register for this webinar certificate course are paired with a mentor to develop and present a peer-reviewed capstone project that demonstrates competencies with a case study application. Our OHP Certificate Program was a central focus for APTA's engagement with the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) as a *Total Worker Health* Affiliate in January 2023. Our next priority is to implement an outward facing search for employers and other stakeholders to drive service referrals and networking opportunities to OHSIG members who have completed their OHP. Stay tuned!

Congratulations

TO OUR FIRST GROUP OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PRACTITIONERS (OHP)

Figure 2. Receiving their OHP plaques at CSM from left to right include: Peter McMenamain, Steve Allison, Chris Petrosino, Leslie Pickett, Rick Wickstrom, Michael Trenary, David Hoyle, and Stephanie Hansen



Figure 3. Those not in attendance to receive their award in person from left to right include Corey Blickenstaff, Lisa Drefft, Jennifer Klose, Sarah Martin, and Michelle Stuart-Urban

