MSc Occupational Therapy

OT6054: Occupational Therapy Research Project 4

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The representation of Occupational Therapy in Irish national newspapers (1990-1999)

Abstract

Background: Documenting the history of occupational therapy allows practitioners to understand the factors which influenced the development of their profession and contemporary practice. The documentation of the history of occupational therapy in Ireland received little attention prior to the recent development of the History of Occupational Therapy Project at the University of Limerick. The representations of the occupational therapy profession in the Irish media are being explored as part of this research.

Objectives: To examine the representations of the occupational therapy profession in Irish national newspapers from 1990-1999. To identify the extent and content of reference to occupational therapy during this era. To examine the factors which may have influenced the progression of the profession in Ireland during the 1990’s.

Methods: An historical documentary research approach was used to gather data from two online newspaper archive databases: the Irish Newspaper and the Irish Times archives. This data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: From 1990-1999, 381 newspaper entries referencing occupational therapy were identified in Irish national newspapers. Three themes emerged from this data: limited undergraduate and postgraduate study options, a broad range of work opportunities and unrest amongst occupational therapists. The progression of the profession during the 1990’s was influenced by the profession itself and the political and economic environment in Ireland at this time.

Conclusion: Mass media forms such as newspapers are an invaluable source of information when reflecting on and documenting the history of the occupational therapy profession in Ireland.

Keywords: occupational therapy, history, media.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Judith Pettigrew for her advice, support and guidance throughout this research project. I would also like to thank my family, friends and fellow classmates for their constant support and help during the past two years.
Introduction

“Every layer they strip
Seems camped on before”

(Heaney 1969)

In his poem ‘The Bogland’, Seamus Heaney refers to the need of exploring the layers of history and the past in order to understand who we are now in the present. According to Trentham (2011), the importance of researching the history of occupational therapy cannot be underestimated. Documentation of a profession’s history is essential for understanding the national and international factors which influenced its development, the professional dilemmas faced by the profession and as a guide for the future direction of the profession (Trentham 2011). Documentation of the development of occupational therapy in Ireland is ongoing. The representation of the occupational therapy profession through different forms of the Irish media is one area that is being researched. It is part of an overall ‘History of Occupational Therapy’ project which is currently being undertaken by occupational therapy researchers in the Clinical Therapies department in the University of Limerick. This current research will be guided by the following question:

How was the occupational therapy profession portrayed in Irish national newspapers from 1990-1999?

The aims of this research were as follows:

- To carry out a comprehensive search and analysis of newspaper entries referencing occupational therapy in various Irish national newspapers from 1990-1999
- To identify the extent to which occupational therapy was represented in national newspapers from 1990-1999
- To identify the content of reference to occupational therapy during this era
- To examine the factors which influenced the progression and promotion of the profession during this time
- To contribute to the documentation of the history of occupational therapy in Ireland
Literature Review

Mayers (2000) refers to the importance of looking at the history of occupational therapy so that current and future practitioners can better understand the growth of their profession and contemporary practice in order to guide future planning and practice. With a few exceptions, little has been published on the history of occupational therapy in Ireland. In 2004, three pieces on Ann Beckett were published in the Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy (Butler and Ryan 2004; Cremin 2004; Patterson 2004). Through these pieces, the reader is given an insight into the life of one of Ireland’s first occupational therapists, from her training in Dorset House to her teaching role in St. Joseph’s Occupational Therapy College in Dublin. Through each authors description of her life, snippets of information on the occupational therapy profession in Ireland during the 20th century are revealed. Walsh (2012) identifies that a lack of occupational therapists in Irish psychiatric services was highlighted as an issue as far back as 1966. McClelland (2012) explores the different activities which were seen as occupational therapy in Holywell Psychiatric Hospital, Antrim from 1959-1973. An interview with Anna King (Boland and Boyle, 1997), one of the founding members of AOTI, identifies some of the changes which occurred in occupational therapy training, education and research in Ireland from the 1960’s onwards. In addition, a paper by Lynch and Pettigrew (2013) was submitted to the Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy in December 2013. This paper explores the professional experiences of occupational therapists who started working in the Republic of Ireland in the 1970s. With little material published nationally, it was necessary to search the literature for relevant information on how occupational therapy professions abroad and other healthcare professions have documented their professions history.

Driven by the belief that the benefits of therapeutic occupation was not adequately recognised by other healthcare professionals, Ann Wilcock provides an extensive record and analysis of occupational therapy from the earliest times right up to present day (as reviewed by Lyons 2003 and Mackenzie 2005). Quiroga (1995) gives a comprehensive overview of the development of occupational therapy in America from 1900 to 1930. This book looks at the main founders of occupational therapy in America, the role of occupational therapy in World War I and the beginnings of formal education for training in occupational therapy. Friedland (2012) identifies the factors that influenced the growth of the profession in Canada from 1890.
to 1930. In a comparison of the historical development of the role of occupational therapy aides in Canada with the United States, Salvatori (2001) examines the different ways in which these two countries have dealt with this issue and how this has impacted on the progression of the Canadian occupational therapy profession. Sedgwick et al (2007) examined the development of mental health occupational therapy in Canada from 1925 to 1950.

Other healthcare professions such as nursing also view knowledge of their history as crucial. In an article about critical care nursing in Northern Ireland, Deeny (2008, p.143) refers to the importance of keeping the past alive as it ‘provides us with the required identity to reflect on where we are at in the present but remains secondary to striving for a brighter future’. By doing this, these professions have gained an understanding of the type and level of practice, knowledge and research which has been required to develop the profession as it stands today and understand the social, political, economical and religious factors which influenced the growth of their professions. (Deeny 2008; Fealy 2005; Robins 2000; Sweeney and Mitchell 2009).

Mass media archives can provide invaluable information on the status of a profession at a specific period of time as represented by the media (Scott 1990). A two-part article by Ambrosi and Schwartz (1995) examined how the image of occupational therapy was represented by the media and by the profession itself from 1917-1925 in America. During this period, the occupational therapy profession was positively endorsed by the media as they recognised the broad range of settings that occupational therapists worked in and particularly in the rehabilitation of injured war veterans, people who suffered injuries in industrial accidents and for mental health illness sufferers. This positive endorsement of occupational therapy by the media helped to show the profession in a positive light within the public domain.

Different forms of mass media include older media such as newspapers, magazines radio, television, film, and newer media such as the internet, satellite and digital television and radio, social media and blogs (Devereux 2007, 2013). To look at all media forms is beyond the scope of this current individual research project owing to the timeline and word count of this project. Therefore, this current research will focus on Irish national newspapers during the period from 1990 to 1999. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the overall
‘History of Occupational Therapy’ project currently being undertaken in the University of Limerick.

**Methodology**

**Search Strategy**

A systematic search strategy was employed to source data from two online newspaper archive databases: the Irish Newspaper and Irish Times archives. These databases were accessed via UL campus computers or log-in via proxy from home using the student UL ID number. The archives were searched by year using the term *occupational therapy* and in a chronological order from 1990 to 1999. Only newspaper articles, letters to editors and advertisements for occupational therapy jobs and courses from national newspapers were included in the search (see Appendices for examples of same). Any relevant data found was printed and filed in a folder.

**Historical Documentary Research Approach**

An historical documentary research approach was the research method used in this study. Historical documentary analysis is more than just finding relevant articles and summarising the main findings from these articles (Sweeney 2005). The researcher must also determine the reliability and accuracy of the data by examining the authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning of the articles (Mogalakwe 2009; Scott 1990).

The authenticity of a document is determined by establishing the genuineness of the document i.e. “whether it is actually what it purports to be” (Scott 1990, pg. 19). In order to establish the genuineness of the document, it is important to question the soundness (is the document an original or copy?) and authorship (person or organisation responsible for document production) of the document (Scott 1990). This involved the researcher asking questions such as the source of the newspaper data, who wrote and edited the articles, when were the articles written and reason for writing articles (Grbich 1999). In analysing newspaper documents, it was important for the researcher to be mindful of problems which might affect authenticity. Such problems include original errors and misprints, use of microfilm newspaper copies and in-house editing procedures which are out of control of the author thereby raising questions about authorship (Scott 1990). The credibility of a document is dependent on the sincerity and accuracy of expressed views. It can be checked against information from other sources at that time to determine whether the article is a trustworthy
source of information (Scott 1990). The researcher noted that there were a lot of examples whereby the information provided on a particular event in one newspaper correlated with that reported by a different newspaper on the same event. In considering the sincerity of the newspaper data, it was important for the researcher to bear in mind that newspaper reporting can be affected by the political or financial interests of the newspaper corporation or other external influences (Scott 1990).

Accurate data representativeness is dependent on the survival and availability of documents from a specific period under research (Scott 1990; Mogalakwe 2009; Sweeney 2005). The Irish Times and Irish Newspaper digital archives contain reproductions/copies of all published articles in Irish National newspapers from 1990-1991 which are fully accessible and available to be viewed online. It was important for the researcher to examine the meaning of all newspaper article content in order to determine how occupational therapy was represented in the Irish media during the 1990’s. The meaning of a document concerns the literal and interpretative understanding of the information which the document contains in context. As the newspaper articles examined were recent documents containing modern language, occupational titles and date formats which the researcher was familiar with, this allowed for easier understanding of the content of the articles in the context in which they were written.

Thematic Analysis

All data gathered and selected as suitable for inclusion in the research project was analysed using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). According to Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79), “thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data.” The researcher first became familiar with the contents of the newspaper archives and recorded any initial observations about the data. The data was coded by year and all recurring codes were organised into a number of different categories. Three main themes emerged about the representations of occupational therapy in Irish national newspapers from 1990-1999.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was not required to undertake this research as data for this project was freely available from public newspaper archives. As these documents are publicly available, it was not necessary to obtain consent for their use from people or organisations that might be
identified in the articles. However, as the period from which the data was collected is very recent, it is likely that person’s which might be identified in the data or authors of articles will still be alive or have living relatives. Therefore, the researcher treated all information and discussion around the data with respect. To ensure that the findings were presented in an unbiased and fair manner, the researcher made sure to objectively and critically evaluate all findings.

Findings

381 newspaper entries referencing occupational therapy were retrieved from the Irish Newspaper and Irish Times Archives from the period 1990-1999. Within the newspaper archives, data was collected from a number of national newspapers: The Irish Times, the Irish Independent, the Sunday Independent and the Irish Press. A breakdown of the types of newspaper entries can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Breakdown of Irish national newspaper entries referencing occupational therapy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Irish Times Archive</th>
<th>Irish Newspaper Archive</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Articles</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job advertisements</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters to Editors of newspapers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All letters to the editors of newspapers were written by students and practising occupational therapists in Ireland. All newspaper articles were written by journalists who were employed by the national newspapers. For the most part, occupational therapy was briefly referred to in articles which focused on the Irish healthcare system, on various illnesses and disabilities, in court case reports and in career-focus articles. A small number of articles were written which focused specifically on the work of occupational therapists in Ireland. The information for these articles was gathered from interviews with working occupational therapists, directors of the school of occupational therapy in Trinity College Dublin and chairpersons of the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland. Table 2 gives a breakdown of the content
of the newspaper articles referencing occupational therapy. A distribution of occupational therapy jobs, by country, can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 2:** Breakdown of newspaper article content referencing occupational therapy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Description</th>
<th>Irish Times Archive</th>
<th>Irish Newspaper Archive</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writings which refer to occupational therapy</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writings specifically focusing on the work of occupational therapists in Ireland</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education/Career focus</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Court Cases</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (including pictures)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3:** Breakdown of job advertisements by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Irish Times Archive</th>
<th>Irish Newspaper Archive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Ireland</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northen Ireland</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abroad</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Through analysis of this data, three themes emerged: limited undergraduate and postgraduate study options, a broad range of work opportunities and unrest amongst occupational therapists. These themes highlight the status of the occupational therapy profession in Ireland during the 1990’s as portrayed through Irish national newspapers.

**Limited undergraduate and postgraduate study options**
During the 1990’s, there was only one undergraduate occupational therapy degree course available in Ireland at Trinity College Dublin (TCD) with only 30 first-year places available annually. Entry points for the occupational therapy course in TCD started at 420 points in 1992 and had reached 500 points by 1999. Postgraduate taught and research courses in occupational therapy only became available at TCD in 1998. The first ever scholarship for occupational therapy in TCD was awarded in this year also (Corcoran 1998, p. 4). The difficulty in obtaining a place on the TCD occupational therapy course meant that Irish students often chose to study occupational therapy in Britain “either for financial or educational reasons” (Murphy 1990, p. 6). Colleges which offered occupational courses in Britain included Brunel University in London, Queen Margaret College in Edinburgh, University of Liverpool, University of Manchester and the University of Ulster, Jordanstown, Northern Ireland. In addition, in 1996, the Irish government introduced higher education grants for Irish students undertaking a full-time, under-graduate course (inlcuding occupational therapy) in an European Union country (Cullen 1996, p.2).

**Broad range of work opportunities**

Approximately 212 occupational therapy positions for the Republic of Ireland were advertised in Irish national newspapers from 1990-1991. By 1997, there were “some 320 occupational therapists working in Ireland” (Foley 1997, p.A14). In 1998, the director of TCD’s occupational therapy school reported that “job prospects at home and abroad” were very good (Byrne 1998, p.4). In 1999, career prospects for occupational therapists were described as “excellent” (Bryne 1999, p.4).

Occupational therapists worked in a variety of settings with people of all ages and differing functional abilities enabling “people to reach their highest level of functioning again so that they can be as independent as possible” (Foley 1997, p.A14). Occupational therapists worked in hospitals, community care, paediatrics, acute and community mental health, intellectual disability and in care of the elderly (both physical and mental health). In 1990, an occupational therapist working with women diagnosed with breast cancer opened “the country’s first specialised prosthesis-fitting and counselling service” (Holmquist 1990, p.9). In addition, a number of occupational therapists gave evidence in some high profile court
cases during the late 1990’s, as evidenced by newspaper reports on same (Anonymous 1999, p.4; Carolan 1999, p.4)

It was not only qualified occupational therapists who worked with patients to help them to achieve maximum independence and functioning in everyday life. In 1996, a two-year pilot project, titled Interact, commenced at TCD’s occupational therapy department. This project provided students with intellectual disability with the opportunity to learn “alongside the college’s occupational therapy first year students while the occupational therapy students got “a chance to gain a vital understanding of people’s needs and differences” (Foley 1996, p.EL10).

Unrest amongst occupational therapists

During the 1990’s, occupational therapists felt that the health service was overwhelmed due to the low numbers of qualified occupational therapists available and that there were few resources to meet the demands of the service. “Occupational therapists have been working in very difficult circumstances with demands outstripping resources (Hanrahan 1997, p.13)”. Occupational therapists in Ireland felt under-valued, over-worked and under-paid as a result of which many newly qualified graduates left Ireland to take up employment abroad or with private practices for better pay and working conditions. ”New graduates abroad are being offered £20-25,000 a year” (Hanrahan 1997, p.13). In Ireland “a new graduate receives £15,708 a year” (Hanrahan 1997, p.13). This resulted in a situation where “occupational therapy positions in Ireland cannot be filled” (Kane and O’Brien 1997, p.13). In 1996, the chairperson of the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) highlighted that a lack of occupational therapists in Irish hospitals was contributing to “long hospital stays” and was “costing the State more than an adequate number of therapists would cost” (Mac Dubhghaill 1996, p.2). In 1997, she again reiterated that there was “a huge shortage of qualified people to fill these jobs” (Foley 1997, p.A14). Such was the frustration of occupational therapists with the Irish healthcare system at this time that they took part in a paramedical strike in April 1997 which lasted 10 days. This strike went ahead “as a demonstration of intent rather than as an action to hurt the public” (Yeates 1997, p.3) in order to highlight the fact that requests for improved working conditions and pay were continuously being ignored by the Irish government. In 1998, an expert group report which had been part of the settlement of the strike in April 1997 found that “occupational therapy services are strained to the limits with 50pc of new graduates choosing to work abroad where
there is better pay and conditions” (McEneaney 1998, p. 5). In 1999, industrial action was threatened in Tallaght hospital as a move to try and “prevent compulsory redundancies” (Yeates 1999, p.3). Staff felt that “morale could not be lower and people will vote with their feet if the board refuses to address problems such as... poor staffing levels and the need for extra people in areas such as occupational therapy” (Yeates 1999, p.3)

Discussion

The changes which occurred in the Irish healthcare system during the 1990’s had an impact on the demand and need for occupational therapy services in Ireland, as is evident by the results of the Bacon Report (2001). This report was initially commissioned due to concerns around an excess demand for therapists (chartered physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists) in the healthcare sector due to difficulties encountered in filling available jobs and retaining staff. This report estimated that the number of occupational therapists would need to increase by 875 in Ireland by 2015 in order to meet the growing demand. In order to meet this need, the main recommendation put forward by this report was the need to overhaul the training and education system and the development of academic courses in different institutions. The findings of this current research indicate that this progression of the occupational therapy profession during the 1990’s was influenced by the professional, political and economic environment in Ireland at this time.

Political and economic influences

From the mid-1990’s, an improving national economic situation coupled with recommendations from a number of published healthcare reports resulted in a shift in government attitude towards improving health services, including occupational therapy services, around the country. During the 1990’s, a number of reports were published both at a local and national level which highlighted the direction in which healthcare in Ireland would need to proceed and the necessary resources and manpower which would be required to achieve this (Dublin Hospital Initiative Group 1990; Department of Health 1994, 1996, 1997). The strategies set out in some of these reports were influenced by developments in the European Union (The Maastricht Treaty 1992, Article 129) and the World Health
Organisation (*Health for All* programme 1977). In these reports, identification of the needs and views of service users and providers was no longer solely driven by local politics and the medical model. There was a shift towards making changes and decisions based on the views of management, medical and nursing staff, allied health professionals, general practitioners and service users. The focus of most of these reports turned towards the delivery of a healthcare system which aimed to improve the health and social gains of service users by supporting people to live as independently as possible in their communities. The role of occupational therapy in the delivery of this system was highlighted by the AOTI chairperson in a letter to the editor of a national newspaper in 1997 when she stated:

“Two recent reports from the Department of Health (‘Services for People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities’ and the ‘Health Strategy’) have highlighted the need for more occupational therapist’s in the country to meet the changing needs of our population...there has been a recommendation for 80 extra”

(Hanrahan 1997, p.13)

In addition, in the early 1990’s, Ireland’s economy was in the process of recovering from the recession which occurred in the 1980’s (O’Donnell 1998). This economic recovery was promoted through strategies such as the *Programme for Economic and Social Progress* (Department of the Taoiseach 1991) and the *Programme for Competitiveness and Work* (Department of the Taoiseach 1994). Throughout the 1990’s, recommendations from health-care reports started to be implemented in the Irish healthcare system which reflected this economic up-turn. National papers frequently reported on a number of planned developments such as:

“a 1.4 million health centre was officially opened by the Eastern Health Board at Swords, Co.Dublin....services include... occupational therapy” (Anonymous 1997, p.2)

“a three-year development of Cappagh Orthopaedic hospital which includes upgrading the occupational therapy services” (Anonymous 1998, p.4)

**Promotion of the profession through print media**
There are some strong concrete examples of the use of Irish print media by occupational therapists to portray a positive public image of the profession, in light of the changes which were occurring in the Irish healthcare system. In a number of articles, occupational therapists were interviewed about their work in which they gave a concise, accurate and positive account of what it means to work as an occupational therapist (Holohan 1992, p.A2; Foley 1997, p.A14). In other articles, the lack of and need for occupational therapists in Ireland was highlighted by representatives of both the professional and academic occupational therapy bodies in Ireland (Anonymous 1993, p.7; McDonald 1994, p.4; Mac Dubhghaill 1996, p.2). Advertisements for AOTI annual conference and career exhibitions were identified on a number of occasions (Anonymous 1991, p.2; Donovan 1992, p.6; Byrne 1994, p.EL4; Donovan 1994, p.10). In addition, both students and qualified occupational therapists were compelled to write letters to the editors of national newspapers. These letters highlighted the work being carried out by the Irish occupational therapy profession on a daily basis and the importance of same in helping patients and their families to overcome both physical and psychological health problems (Faull 1994, p.13; Hanrahan 1997, p.13; Riordan, O’Reilly, O’Connell and Hanrahan 1997, p. 25; Cassidy and Malone 1997, p. 28; Kane and O’Brien 1997, p.13).

However, in comparing these few examples to the level of data collected overall for this research project, one would have to question if the profession could have been more proactive in utilising the Irish print media during the 1990’s to help the public and other professions to gain a better understanding of the important work carried out by occupational therapists. In 1992, a careers focus article on occupational therapy identified that “one of the main difficulties occupational therapists face is the lack of public understanding about what they do as a profession” (Holohan 1992, p.A2). Twenty-two years later, this still appears to be the case. From the researcher’s personal experience, explaining what an occupational therapist is and the work that they carry out are questions which the researcher commonly finds herself answering for her family, friends, and patients and in social situations.

**Implications of this study for Occupational Therapy**

This research shows that occupational therapy, like all other healthcare professions, will never be immune to the effects of the political, social and economic environments of a country. In an article from an Irish national newspaper, occupational therapists, along with other allied health professionals were described as “indispensable cogs in patient care”
providing clinical support services both in acute and community settings (Fallon 1993, p.A13). For this to remain true, it is the responsibility of every occupational therapist to be clear about their role and to utilise all available resources in ensuring that this is portrayed in a positive manner to the public.

One of the main implications of the results of this study for occupational therapy concerns the importance of using the media in order to promote the work of the profession. As outlined in the literature review, the nursing profession is one profession that stands out in this regard. They are proactive in tackling but also utilising the media representation of their profession thus ensuring the growth of their profession in a positive manner. Issues such as the stereotypical image of the nursing profession, the perceived lower level of importance of the work carried out by nurses and the portrayal of the nursing profession during industrial strikes have all been challenged by the profession through the media (Counts and Gagan 2005; Cabaniss 2011; Clarke and O’Neill 2001). In addition, occupational therapists must take responsibility to become familiar with and communicate via the many different media forms in order to get a realistic image of what occupational therapists do into the public domain. By doing this, a positive and informed image of occupational therapy can be portrayed to the public, policymakers and other health professionals. This in turn can have a positive impact on recruitment numbers, greater financial support for education and research and appropriate renumeration which reflects an acknowledgement of the importance of their work. Jacobs (2012) discusses how the work of occupational therapists can be promoted through words, images and actions and one of the most effective ways of achieving this is through the use of different media forms. This was never more evident than in today’s world of social media where sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Linkedin allow for instant access to the most up-to-date information. Encouragingly, occupational therapy organisations worldwide are now utilising these social media sites as a major media promotion tools.

**Limitations of the study**

There are two main limitations of this study. Firstly, only one media form i.e. newspapers was examined in this project. Secondly, the researcher initially planned to examine newspaper articles from both local and national newspapers. However, owing to the large volume of relevant data found, it was neither feasible nor realistic for the researcher to analyse all of this data within the specified timeframe of the project. Therefore, the
researcher chose to only analyse data from national newspapers. Both of these limitations meant that a lot of potentially useful information from local newspapers and other media forms was excluded from the outset. As a result, the findings of this research cannot be considered a total representation of the extent and nature of the portrayal of the occupational therapy profession through the Irish media during the 1990’s.

Recommendations for future research

There are two main recommendations for future research. Firstly, it is recommended that local and regional newspapers should be analysed. Before scaling back this current project, the researcher had identified a high number of references to occupational therapy in these papers. Secondly, it is recommended that future research involves analysis of other media archives including television, radio, social media sites and other forms of print media. Both of these recommendations, in conjunction with the findings of this current research would comprehensively contribute to overall efforts to document the history of occupational therapy in Ireland.

Conclusion

It is important to document the history of any profession as this allows one to understand how the impact of historical events has shaped current realities. This current research examined the extent and nature of the representations of the occupational therapy profession in Irish national newspapers from 1990-1999. Data was sourced from two online newspaper archive databases: the Irish Newspaper and Irish Times archives, using an historical documentary research approach. As part of this approach, the researcher had to address issues concerning the reliability and validity of the data (Scott 1990). 381 newspaper entries referencing occupational therapy were deemed as suitable for inclusion in the research project and were analysed using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). The findings of this research suggest that the occupational therapy profession in Ireland continued to develop, expand and progress throughout the 1990’s and was influenced by professional, political and economic factors. A continuous increase in occupational therapy positions, employment of
occupational therapists in a wide variety of settings and frequent references to the limited undergraduate study options in Ireland were all reflective of this.

In order to ensure the continued growth and survival of our profession, it is essential to reflect on the past so that we can understand how this has shaped current practice. Learning from past events and mistakes will help to guide and shape the future direction of our profession. A positive and an informed image of occupational therapy must be portrayed to the public, policymakers and other health professions. It is the responsibility of every occupational therapist to be clear about their role and to utilise all available resources in ensuring that this happens. One such resource is mass media which the profession must learn how to best utilise in promoting the work of their profession. This is especially true today with access to such a wide variety of social media network sites which allow for instant access to the most up-to-date information.
References


Devereux, E. (2013) *Understanding the media*, Los Angeles, California: SAGE.


Appendices
Occupational hazards

Foley, Catherine


The Irish Times (1859-2012) and The Weekly Irish Times (1859-1918), PG A14

Catherine Foley

"M"Y ADVICE TO ANYONE, who is likely to work in this area, is to try to get some of the training in Dublin as well as in Trinity College, Dublin. There are just 20 places each year to train in Dublin, but the school of occupational therapy at Trinity is very good. It is not only the curriculum that is good; it is also the lecturers. The school is very committed to the professional development of the students, and the research is excellent. The students are very well prepared for their careers, and they are encouraged to pursue further education.

The school, which is located in the city of Dublin, offers a four-year program. The program includes coursework in anatomy, physiology, psychology, and sociology. In addition, students are required to complete a clinical internship. The internship is an integral part of the program, as it provides students with hands-on experience in the field of occupational therapy.

The field of occupational therapy is expanding rapidly, and there is a growing demand for therapists. There are opportunities both在国内和海外, and graduates of the program are well-prepared for a variety of careers. Whether you choose to work in the field of rehabilitation, healthcare, or education, you will be well-equipped to make a positive impact on the lives of others.

The program at Trinity College is highly regarded, and graduates are highly sought after. If you are interested in pursuing a career in occupational therapy, I would highly recommend considering Trinity College. The program is rigorous, but it is also rewarding, and it will provide you with the skills and knowledge you need to succeed in this fulfilling field.

Catherine Foley

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Points:
FMAAY points test for degree course at LCU last year was 49.6. Upper
minimum leaving CSE results are
in English, pass in maths and two in
English, or pass in English, or pass in
Latin, and pass in a
language other
than English, or pass in
Latin, and pass in a
subject other than
language, plus passes in
the further
subjects. No subjects
must be taken in all.
All schools must be
at least grade C
or higher leaving CSE.
One of the higher-level
CSEs must be Maths,
Physics, Chemistry,
Biology, Physics,
Chemistry or
agriculture. Results
will be checked. Leaving
Certificate will be
considered. Minimum
requirements can
usually be met by
applicants.

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contact the
Admissions Office.

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to £14,000. Average
salary for
partners in
£21,750 and in
£23,396. Basic
throughput of
£13,652 to £22,220.09
from £20,520
£27,408. Figures were
compiled by the
Department of Health.

Next week: Geology
The helping hand as therapy

CAREERS FOCUS

Anne Holohan throws some light on the important work done by our occupational therapists.

The helping hand as therapy

The Irish Times (1870-1920) Feb 28, 1902
ProQuest Historical Newspapers: The Irish Times (1859-2011) and The Weekly Irish Times (1876-1955)
Indispensable cogs in patient care

NIAHLE FALLOW examines the

what, how

The South Times (1864-1892)
Force Times (1899-1931) and The Mirror (1864-1908)

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Long hospital stays blamed on lack of therapy services

by Ciara Mac Dhughaill

PATIENTS may have to wait for months or years for hospital treatment, according to the Association of Occupational Therapists in Ireland.

The association's chairwoman, Maureen Hamill, told a conference of therapists that many hospitals were not able to provide the necessary services for patients, while the community services were also under pressure.

"As the population continues to age, the problem will grow worse and the already substantial demand for occupational therapy services will increase," she said.

There are 730 occupational therapists in the Republic, with a population of over 2.5 million, compared to 346 in the North, serving 1.5 million people. The North's health services face similar problems, but the issue is more acute in the South because of the shortage of therapists.

"The lack of therapists means that patients have to be referred to other services, such as social work or community health services," she added.

The conference, which was attended by occupational therapists from all over the country, discussed the need for more therapists and better training for those already in the profession.

"There is a shortage of therapists in many areas, especially in rural areas," said one attendee.

"We need to start thinking about ways to attract more people to the profession," added another.

The conference ended with a call for urgent action from the Government to address the shortage of therapists and improve the quality of services provided to patients.
Health specialist shortage 'far worse than UK'
### DEGREE POINTS 1996

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ECCENTRICITY AND THERAPY

Sir — Facilities relating to children with severe mental and physical disabilities are often insufficient to meet the needs of the most difficult cases. When their child reaches the age of 11, a family, such as the one described in the letter from Mrs. K., can be left with no alternative but to place the child in a residential institution, as the family is unable to provide adequate care at home. The strain on their family is enormous, and there is a real need for greater support and assistance from the medical and social services.

On April 1st, 1,000 health care workers will be paid an extra £6 a week, bringing the total to £38 a week. This extra payment is seen as a gesture of support from the government, acknowledging the hard work and dedication of the health care workers during the pandemic. However, many families are still facing financial difficulties and are unable to provide adequate care for their children.

A new study has found that 50% of families with children with severe disabilities are struggling to meet their financial needs. The study highlights the importance of providing adequate support and resources to families in order to prevent further strain on the health care system.

We hope that this letter will bring attention to the needs of families like Mrs. K.'s, and encourage the government to provide greater support and resources to meet the needs of children with severe disabilities. We believe that every child deserves the best possible care, and we urge the government to take action to ensure that this care is available to all children.