Letters to the Editor

Against Use of Physical Agent Modalities

It is with an acute sense of the significance of the physical agent modalities issue on the future of our profession that I fully endorse the position taken and the recommendations made by Wilma L. West and Ruth Brunyate Wiemer (AJOY, December 1991, pp. 1143-1147). There can be no denying that the health care system of today is economically and politically driven. Too frequently, patient treatment plans are influenced by what is reimbursable and under what circumstances rather than by what is best for the patient. In such a market-driven, politically motivated system, we often find ourselves pressured into practicing expediency rather than what we know occupational therapy to be. The priority becomes how rapidly we can move patients through the routine of administering the pill. Many other similar examples can be cited to demonstrate the questionable logic of this thesis. One further point within this context is that loose boundaries work both ways—As we move into the territory of others, so then is it their privilege to usurp ours.

During dialogues around these issues, I have on several occasions been asked the following questions: Does opposition to this resolution reflect a certain rigidity, a preference for and comfort with the status quo? Is there a danger that we set limits to trying new approaches and thus limit exploration of our potential and our growth? The implication here is that our freedom to grow and develop is stifled if we cannot reach beyond our commonly accepted identity. If we claim the need to employ modalities commonly associated with another profession in order to secure our credibility and position in the health care system, then we fail to strengthen our own identity. The strength, the efficacy of any profession is grounded in the validity of that profession's fundamental principles. We do indeed have a long way to go to first explore and validate occupational therapy and, I suggest, an equally long way to go before the potential of our fundamental parameters is exhausted.

It is truly ironic that we continue to devalue the essence of occupational therapy, that we struggle to look more like others than like ourselves when all the while these others are discovering the efficacy of authentic occupational therapy and striving to own it.

Gail S. Fidler, OTR, FAOTA
Dallas, PA

Rabbi Hirsch Influenced the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy

Congratulations on the Special 75th Anniversary Issue (January 1992). It was wonderful to see so many fine articles on occupational therapy's history in one issue. Guest Editor Schwartz's invitation "to engage in the dialogue and offer a different interpretation" (p. 9) prompts me to respond. One important point of occupational therapy history referred to in Loomis's article ("The Henry B. Favill School of Occupations and Eleanor Slagle," pp. 34-37) seems to invite clarification.

Loomis's article states, "This course was organized by Julia Lathrop, social worker and assistant to [Julia] Addams, with the help of a local rabbi, Rabbi Hirsch" (p. 35). This reference to the renowned Rabbi Emil Gustave Hirsch (Breines, 1989, in press; Hirsch, 1968) tends to obscure his prominence and his role in the founding of the Chicago School of Civics and Philanthropy.

Hirsch was one of the founding figures of American Reform Judaism; contributed to the founding of the University of Chicago, where Dewey's Laboratory School was located; and was the editor of the Reform Advocate, a widely distributed newspaper devoted to social activism. Hirsch and Lathrop worked together on many civic projects (Addams, 1935), the Chicago School being only one of them. Hirsch's recognition of occupations as tools for social benefit is additionally reflected in his role as founder of the Jewish Manual Training School for immigrant children. Hirsch was a force for change in a society and a world undergoing change. Addams, a Quaker woman, was invited to speak from Hirsch's pulpit in a time when such tradition-breaking actions were unusual. The name of the Chicago School for Civics and Philanthropy appears to derive from interests attributed to Hirsch in his memorial booklet (Breines, 1989, in press; Cowan, 1923). Additionally, if my recollections about my readings of Slagle's letters (ca. 1917) are correct, Hirsch's name is imprinted on her stationery, thereby indicating Hirsch's position in the Chicago Mental Hygiene Society, the sponsor of the Favill School.

It thus appears that Hirsch's influence on occupational therapy may be greater than as a helper to Lathrop.

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References


Use of the Narrative in the Health Professions

I want to let you know how much I enjoyed the recent Special Issue on Clinical Reasoning (November 1991). I especially enjoyed the articles that talked about narrative reasoning (e.g., Mattingly's "The Narrative Nature of Clinical Reasoning" [pp. 998-1005]). It is fascinating to me to see how emphasis on the narrative is coming to the fore in medicine, nursing, and occupational therapy.

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Loved the Play

I just loved "Point of Departure (A Play About Founding the Profession)"] by Robert K. Bing in the Special 75th Anniversary Issue (January 1992). It was clever, well-written, and informative.

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OT Involvement in Work Hardening Has Long History

I am writing to express my delight and appreciation for the article by Hanson and Walker ("The History of Work in Physical Dysfunction," pp. 56-62) regarding the history of work, which appeared in the Special 75th Anniversary Issue of AJOT (January 1992). As a graduate student more than a decade ago, I researched the history of our profession in work programs and was gratified, but not surprised, to note our involvement over many years in the practice area of work as therapy. I, too, found many references to the use of work to harden a person for resumption of productive roles. I have tried in my travels to create this awareness among my colleagues. I have grown weary of seeing claims of a certain psychologist as "the father of work hardening." It is so important to have our long history documented in a national professional journal such as AJOT for the benefit of future researchers within and outside of our profession. I thank the authors, Hanson and Walker, and the Guest Editor, Kathleen Barker Schwartz, for this.

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Correction


"The book editors' names were spelled incorrectly. The correct names are Jeffrey S. Kreutzer and Paul H. Wehman. In addition, the correct spelling of the publisher's name is Brookes Publishing, and the actual price of the book is $48. The AJOT editorial staff regrets these errors and hopes readers were not inconvenienced."