Part 1 of this paper appeared in the December 1989 Nationally Speaking column. It was designed to reinforce the potential of occupational therapy in a changing world and to underscore the linkages between education, practice, and research.

In this concluding paper, I have outlined short- and long-term imperatives by which we can strengthen the components of and the linkages between occupational therapy practice, education, and research. The achievement of these imperatives will lend credibility to our professional vision.

Short-Term Imperatives

Practice

My overarching short-term imperative for practice is that we focus and define with a single voice the core of our service, which is the use of occupation as therapy. Professional books and journal articles of the 1980s have elaborated on the rationale for this imperative. Yet external forces that have emphasized outcome measurability seem to have persuaded some of our colleagues to use more tangible techniques such as physical agents of treatment and a concomitant devaluation of self-help through activity. This, in turn, has led to such diversification of practice that we can no longer identify our uniqueness and thereby jeopardized our legitimate claim for reimbursement. Age-appropriate, interest-motivating, and self-actualizing occupations abound in everyday play and work environments. These occupations are infinitely better suited to meeting human needs to be accepted, to be useful, and to know the dignity of independence than are all the heat, light, water, electricity, and other physical agents in the world. Let us stop borrowing modalities from other disciplines while selling short our own. Let us apply sound critical thinking and creative problem solving skills to the task of reunifying our practice.

Education

The first short-term imperative for occupational therapy education, I believe, is the use of outside university faculty to buttress our program. One obvious but important reason for this lies in our shortage of qualified educators, but another is the richness of knowledge available from other fields. Several of our schools are currently using such resources, but I urge the significant expansion of both the number of schools doing so and the range of fields from which faculty are drawn.

The second short-term imperative for education is that we teach principles rather than techniques, and knowledge rather than skills. In the past, we have taught skills at the expense of content and developed our curricula in scope but not in depth. Some teachers seem to have catered to their students' low tolerance for ambiguity and preference for concrete over analytical or abstract material. Such a curriculum, however, does not produce therapists who can meet challenging clinical problems with creative and alternative solutions. One of our most limiting professional traits is our propensity to seek solutions before gaining a fundamental understanding of the reason for the problem. A chronic nightmare of such pioneers as Ayres and Rood was the number of their disciples who sought only the techniques and not the theory upon which they rested.

The third short-term imperative for education is increased support of graduate education, consistent with the American Occupational Therapy Association's policy of expanding graduate-level education for professional entry. The American Occupational Therapy Foundation's Board of Directors, at its meeting in June 1989, passed a motion to allocate at least 50% of its annual scholarships to graduate-level students.

Research

A primary short-term imperative in research, in my opinion, is the greater
use of specific requests for proposals that will result in studies specifically responsive to established priorities. Because there is never enough money to support all we would like to do, this shift will require a corresponding decrease in the number of small research grants for separate and unrelated research and on funding education for research. Although such aspects of the research program supported by the Association and Foundation since 1978 represent a sound investment in new researchers, I suggest that we give more support to research that holds promise of meeting our identified needs, for example, the standardization of measurement instruments developed through requests for proposals.

A second imperative for research is the need for outcome studies to document the efficacy of interventions. I feel strongly that our best hope for such documentation, with numbers that will have significance, lies in collaborative studies that link together therapists using the same treatment strategies for patients with the same conditions. Potentials for these studies previously existed in caseloads of cerebrovascular accident patients in acute hospitals. Do these or other patient populations still exist in other settings where time is not a restriction and colleagues could be motivated to standardize their strategies for common benefit?

The third imperative for occupational therapy research is the greater use of qualitative methodology, which seems eminently suited to the study of the psychosocial and behavioral problems that pervade occupational therapy caseloads. Qualitative research methods employ the use of recorded observations of human behavior and performance in natural contexts such as at home, at work, and during leisure time. What a natural form of study for our field!

Long-Term Imperatives

I believe that education is the most important focus in the long term; practice and research follow from education. I applaud and commend the Entry Level Study Committee for their report entitled *Occupational Therapy: Directions for the Future* (American Occupational Therapy Association, 1987). I am such a fan of this report that I believe it should be required reading for every occupational therapist. I wish to emphasize the importance of three key imperatives for the future of education as identified in that report:

1. We must move from our current linear/vocational/allied health model to a hierarchical/academic/professional model of education.
2. We must accept the necessity of a liberal arts baccalaureate degree as a prerequisite for entry to professional education at the graduate level.
3. To accomplish the first and second imperatives, we must develop an academic discipline based on an abstract body of knowledge and on applied sciences that translate that body of knowledge into solutions for the problems we confront in practice.

Although I believe that these encapsulated imperatives reflect the major recommendations of the report, we do the authors and ourselves an injustice if we do not study the full report in considerable depth. This scholarly and comprehensive report is clear, logical, and well documented. We must do more, however, than simply accept the serious and challenging changes that we are to implement in the next several years; we must comprehend the rationales for all of them. This requires a full understanding and internalization of the entire report.

The outcomes of our commitment will, indeed, be worth our efforts. These outcomes are the survival of our educational programs in the university, the achievement of recognition as a profession, and the proof of our right to practice. Who among us would ask for anything less? ▲

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