

Word from the President

Evelien Visser

This month we celebrate World OT day. It is also the first anniversary of the Kazakhstan Ergotherapy Association (KEA). After several years of pioneering Occupational Therapy, it is great to have formed an association and to be ready for the further development of our profession.

This year we look back on 10 years of pioneering Occupational Therapy in Kazakhstan. In 2006 there was only one Occupational Therapist practising in the villages in the Panvilov area, Almaty oblast. When we started this association two years ago, we had six OT's working in three different cities. But with a population of 17 million people in Kazakhstan, it's still our aim to see many more trained OT's.

For me, as founder and president of KEA, it is time to say goodbye to Kazakhstan. My family and I are moving back to the Netherlands. But the start of KEA has been one of the highlights of our OT work here. And there's a great team of OT's continuing the work. From now on Gerdine Lok will be interim president.

I hope Kazakhstan will open the way for Occupational Therapy education to be of benefit in all the opportunities that Occupational Therapists provide!



World Occupational Therapy Day

Linda Beadle – Occupational Therapist in Almaty

World Occupational Therapy Day is celebrated every year on the 27th of October.

Since it was first launched on 27th October 2010, Occupational Therapy Day has become an important date in the occupational therapy calendar to promote and celebrate the profession internationally.

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) is the international voice of the occupational therapy profession which consists of 92 national occupational therapy professional organisations.

World Occupational Therapy Day is the opportunity to heighten the visibility of the profession's development work and to promote the activities of WFOT locally, nationally, and internationally. World Occupational Therapy Day will help to increase the awareness of occupational therapists and society of the truly global impact of occupational therapy – hopefully including the impact it has in Kazakhstan! (Taken from: <http://www.wfot.org/AboutUs/WorldOTDay.aspx>)

A story

Evelien Visser

Jadakar (for privacy reasons, name has been changed) is a little boy with a paralyzed arm. By the time I met him, he was 7 years old, living together with his parents, grandparents and sister in a village in south-east Kazakhstan. He used to ignore his left arm. If he needed two hands he would just wait for help. My challenge was to change this habit.

One goal during therapy was to teach him how to dress himself. It was more his parents' desire than his own, he was very happy to be helped with everything.

We started off playing a lot together. Play is fun, but when it is used with the right intentions it is very beneficial and even necessary for children's development. Jadakar enjoyed playing together, but he didn't realize that in the meanwhile he was working hard to use his left arm and increase his muscle strength! Slowly we progressed towards dressing. It was a tough job, doing something he had never had to do before, with his arm that he didn't like to use. But he realized that he was learning to get his clothes on by himself.

In the end, we had a boy that knew how to dress himself and a happy grandmother! And the whole family was proud of their boy. For all of them it was a revelation that he could do things himself. And this revelation of occupation continued to influence the boy's life and his family further.

Training opportunities

Gerdine Lok – Occupational Therapist in Shymkent

In September, three of our OT's in Kazakhstan gathered and organized a 5-day training for mainly social workers in the city of Taraz. We were invited by a locally registered Public Fund, in partnership with different clinics and organizations, who are working with children and young people with special needs. It was hopefully the start of continuing training. During the week, we focused mainly on basic observation skills, setting goals and using equipment for interventions.

Once again we have seen the impact of OT in the life of children with Cerebral Paresis. The morning sessions were mainly theory, supported by videos, case studies and (personal) stories. After lunch children would come in and a group of social workers would work with the child and his/her family on the goals that had been set. And that's when the excitement began!

- Children who weren't able to sit by themselves experienced the support of a special chair and started to play with both hands (a great fine-motor skill exercise!).
- Children who couldn't walk by themselves started to use a walker and were able to play football with other kids, without having to ask someone to hold them.
- Children who had never been able to stand in a good position tried with a standing frame. This gave them great opportunities to look around, interact with others, and play with the toys in front of them.

Besides all the excitement that the children and their parents experienced, there were a lot of goals they were working on – without knowing it (*i.e. avoiding the risk of hip displacement*). Again, this is the strength of Occupational Therapy: evidence based therapy, where, through practical and daily life activities, the quality of life of a child and his family is increased.



Edited by Bouwine van Eeden Petersman

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