



News from the Kazakhstan Ergotherapy Association



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Word of the president

Welcome to this, our first newsletter for the year. Ordinarily this first newsletter would welcome you all to the new year and hold much excitement for the year ahead. However, I feel that it is important to acknowledge the events of Jan 4th-10th. For those who were or continue to be impacted by these events, on behalf of KEA, may I offer our deepest sympathies.

From an occupational perspective, trauma has the ability to hold people captive. It prevents our full participation in normal occupations, halts development and impedes our ability to function well in work, leisure, self-care, and relational roles. At the same time, we also heal through occupation. Participating in activities that are meaningful and energise us in the context of those who love and support us can be a powerful healer. It communicates to our bodies and minds the return of normal life rhythms, of safety, of empowerment and of connectedness. It gives avenues to process what has happened and what that means for us. If left unattended, trauma will wreak havoc with our mental health, physical health, relationships and more, potentially impacting on every part of life. On the other hand, if we can process the fear, grief and pain in a healthy way, the experience can leave us stronger, more integrated within ourselves, more compassionate towards others and wakes us up to our priorities. May I encourage you to take the time and space needed to engage in those activities that heal you should you need it.

The later part of 2021 was a busy time for KEA promoting and developing the profession. October saw training in ergotherapy for clinicians working with children with cerebral palsy in and around Shymkent. This coincided with World OT Day where the participants were able to celebrate through games and simulation activities.

December saw Nur-Sultan host the 8th Republican Scientific and Practical Conference 'Priorities Directions of Rehabilitation and Balneology'. KEA was invited to speak on ergotherapy as a profession and to consider with participants how it might contribute to the healthcare system in Kazakhstan. The conference was well attended by practitioners, academics, and ministry officials, from all over the country as well as international speakers. The conference created a wonderful space to connect with others and hear from pioneers and leaders of the rehabilitation sector. KEA has also been in conversation with a Kazakh university, exploring the potential of university education for ergotherapy.

I am immensely excited by what is happening here in Kazakhstan from an ergotherapy perspective. There is real momentum building both at a grassroots level among clinicians as well as within educational facilities. There is hope that 2022 will see increased support and connectedness for those currently employed as ergotherapists; and perhaps the start of university level education for future ergotherapists. These are significance developments, and it is a real privilege as KEA to be able to participate and support them. We invite you to join with us as we step forward with hope and real anticipation of what is to come in this coming year.

Before I close, I would like to pay tribute the persevering work of my predecessor Gerdine, who over the past 5yrs held our association together. During times of limited capacity, the pandemic, and major life transitions for several of our members, she kept the association moving steadily towards our goals. She did so with incredible professionalism, compassion, and skill. Gerdine, we thank you for your time, energy, guidance, passion, and grace, and wish you all the very best in your future endeavours.

Petra Magerl
President of KEA



A change of perspective by Nathan Visser, Occupational Therapist

Recently I ran an Occupational Therapy (OT) course in Shymkent in conjunction with the International Medical exchange. On the final day of the course, it is important to reflect on what has been achieved and to name what learning has been made. There was an opportunity to share and comment on the course. One of the course participants, a neurologist, shared the following story which shows why we are so excited about education and OT, and which makes every effort worth it:

"I want to share about a mother who brought her one-and-a-half-year-old daughter for a consultation during this course. Her whole perspective changed about her own daughter after this. Instead of seeing the disabled child she now sees her able daughter, doing so many things. Before she came for the consultation, the mother always only saw the disability. She told me: "My child cannot walk, she can't even stand or crawl, she just lays on the ground without talking. She just makes sounds, but she doesn't even say mama or papa. I felt that I failed as a mother." Her other children developed well, but this daughter came late, when she was already 39. The child had a fall at 7 months. Consequently, the mother really felt that she had failed, and she was constantly busy trying hard to cure the disabilities. She only saw what her daughter couldn't do. But at the consultation the OT started to show her the things that her daughter could do. He pointed out how she communicates with her eyes, she points, grasps, and makes sounds. She is also able to roll, lift her head, sit by herself on the floor, and play with her older siblings. She smiles, cries, interacts and is socially very active. The developmental chart that was used during the consultation made all the things learned very visible.

When the OT explained more about cerebral palsy and the different diagnosis, the mother realized how fortunate she is. Her daughter will probably have the opportunity to walk, go to school and live and grow like other children. For now, walking is not the most important goal. The mother will assist her daughter's development and enjoy every small progress that she makes on her way to, hopefully one day, walking with a walking frame. She asked me to express her gratitude to the OT and thank him for inviting her. It really helped the mother to have the time to talk, and those other participants were playing with her daughter and showing her everything that her daughter can do. This completely changed mother's view. She now realizes that she didn't fail but has been preoccupied by the disability and fixing what was wrong. Now she just wants to look at all the possibilities and enjoy her lovely daughter!



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