



June 2022

No 7 (2)

Word of the President

Hello to our loyal readers and to those who may be 'stopping by'. I wanted to take a moment to thank you for your ongoing interest and support, as together we promote occupational therapy in Kazakhstan. We continue to move slowly but steadily towards OT being recognised and offered to those who need it most, provided by locals and expatriates alike.

The past season has seen more opportunities for teaching, mentoring, and becoming involved in various health care settings. Some of our group have been involved in the vital work of supporting the parents of children with disabilities. Linda has written a piece explaining the important role parents play and how they are both a key part of the therapy team and a recipient of occupational therapy. There has also been a growing interest in Early Intervention. This may be a new area for health services to become involved in and is an exciting move in the development of therapy options. But what exactly is 'Early Intervention'?

Early Intervention (EI) is the term given to therapies for children aged birth to 3yrs old (although some services include up to 5yr olds). EI is not treatment specific nor diagnosis specific but used with infants that have been identified as having developmental delays or because of certain neurological risk factors are at a high probability of delays in the future. The primary goal of EI is to improve the long-term prognosis of a child, by capitalising on the still developing brain.

In the first years of life our brains are primed for learning, in way unlike any other time. EI seeks to make the most of this by creating new brain connections that help negate damage that may have occurred in the pre/perinatal period. Furthermore, the brain seeking to be efficient will 'prune' unused pathways in the brain in late infancy. As such, the more pathways that can be stimulated and used through therapy, the greater chance the child has of being able to learn and develop in the future. Supporting the family in their care and understanding of their child is another major goal of EI. Therapy will involve teaching the family how to interact, choose activities and create environments that are most helpful for their child's development. EI also teaches parents how their child learns, plays, communicates and loves supporting them in developing a strong relationship; and gives them tools for advocating for their child throughout childhood and beyond.

These factors combined provide a good foundation for both the child and the family as a whole.

We are excited by the possibilities Early Intervention services can offer families here in Kazakhstan, and look forward to partnering with them in the future.

Petra Magerl
President of KEA



A Family Centered Approach in a Communal Culture

Bouwine van Eeden Petersman, Ergotherapist

A family centered approach is essential when we are working with children with disabilities. This means collaborating with the family and including them in Occupational Therapy. Children are part of a family, family members are the ones that spend the most time with their child and know them the best. Throughout the day parents and other caregivers naturally have a lot of interaction with their children, which are all opportunities to implement therapy into daily activities, such as eating, dressing and playing. Therefore, educating and training parents on how they can progress their child's development is vitally important and should be a main focus of therapy.

A family centered approach doesn't only assess the needs of the child, but the needs of the whole family. In Kazakhstan, having (a child with) a disability often brings shame, guilt and social exclusion. Therefore our Occupational Therapists in Almaty regularly organize a meeting of children with disabilities and their families. This provides a place for families to get social support in a safe place. Meeting other families can bring a sense of belonging which is important in the communal culture in Kazakhstan.

While the children are connecting through play and games, parents have time to connect together, for example through an art session. Talking about emotions is not common in the Kazakh culture, so using art helps the moms to express themselves and share emotions in a safe place. Sharing experiences also provides a place of learning from one another and gives opportunities to support other families emotionally or with practical advice. This gives them a feeling of belonging and results in better well-being for the whole family.



 info@ergotherapy.kz
 ergotherapy.kz

 [kazakhstan.ergotherapy](https://www.instagram.com/kazakhstan.ergotherapy)
 [Kazakhstan Ergotherapy Association](https://www.facebook.com/KazakhstanErgotherapyAssociation)



Edited by Linda Beadle

This newsletter will be distributed every three months. Do you have any questions or recommendations?

Or do you want to unsubscribe from the newsletter? Please contact info@ergotherapy.kz