

**FALL 2009**

# COTNS NEWS

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## H1N1 PANDEMIC

With the H1N1 Pandemic upon us, the College has been receiving questions from members and employers regarding the role of occupational therapists as well as the role of the College during an infectious disease outbreak. The following was adapted from the College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO) Position Statement on Influenza Pandemic and Registrant Pandemic Planning Kit available on the COTO website at [www.coto.org](http://www.coto.org) as well as the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia (CRNNS) Emergency Preparedness Plan available on their website at [www.crnns.ca](http://www.crnns.ca).

### Role of Occupational Therapists

Occupational therapists have a professional obligation as well as the legal requirement to provide clients with safe, competent and ethical care. This professional obligation extends to a public health emergency such as a pandemic.

It is important to recognize that as health professionals, occupational therapists have a role to play in contributing to a health emergency such as a pandemic. The College recognizes that occupational therapists possess a number of skills which can contribute to the execution of local pandemic plans. In an emergency, there may be a need for health care professionals to be reallocated from their usual roles and settings. It is the position of the College that occupational therapists should consider the following key issues in relation to their professional roles and responsibilities.

- To become and remain informed regarding the provincial and local pandemic plans, particularly regarding the role of occupational therapy and to ensure that current and relevant information is available for ongoing decision making.

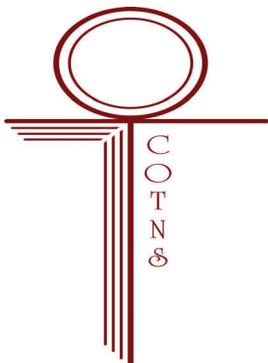
- To maintain and make available resources appropriate to the practice setting and provider role, for purposes of personal and public safety, as well as to participate in the implementation of any safety precautions, such as infection prevention and control.

- To consider personal competencies relevant to the provision of care during a pandemic and develop a plan for decision making and involvement.

- To make decisions regarding provision of care based on consideration of a profession specific Code of Ethics or within an ethical framework.

- To work within the legislative structure of the Occupational Therapy Act when considering new roles and responsibilities.

- To comply with government directives announced pre, during and post pandemic.



### **H1N1 Pandemic (cont'd.)**

The SARS epidemic in Ontario demonstrated that decisions during pandemics were made not only based on clinical and epidemiological issues but also on important human values. Following this epidemic, an ethical framework was developed in response to the experiences of healthcare providers. This framework developed by the University of Toronto Joint centre for Bioethics reported by Peter A Singer, Solomon R Benatar, Mark Bernstein, et al (BMJ 2003;327:1342-1344) provides guidelines to identify and resolve possible ethical issues in a pandemic. It is available at [www.jointcentreforbioethics.ca/people/documents/upshur\\_stand\\_guard.pdf](http://www.jointcentreforbioethics.ca/people/documents/upshur_stand_guard.pdf)

The ethical framework is not intended to be a total guide to ethics for an emergency/disaster. In the actual situation, occupational therapists will need to use their judgement, consult their professional Codes of Ethics and consult additional resources such as the College, employers, colleagues, educators and others with expertise in ethics.

### **Role of the College**

During a pandemic the role of the College is:

1. To ensure effective communication with registrants – The overall goal of communication during a pandemic will be to maintain the role of the College as an organization committed to public protection and the advancement of safe, competent and ethical occupational therapy practice. Meeting this goal will require an emphasis on providing occupational therapists with resources specific to the pandemic and developing collaborative partnerships to ensure that the College has links to relevant information and decision making.
2. To provide advice on regulatory issues and standards of practice – The ability to provide professional practice consultation is an essential role of the College which will continue during a pandemic. It is essential that the College support occupational therapists while maintaining protection of the public.
3. Maintain a mechanism to register qualified professionals and to conduct other business as required to address regulatory issues.

### **How do I prepare?**

It is important that you take time to educate yourself on this topic. Occupational therapists should review materials such as provincial and local pandemic planning; ensure good infection control practices are established and maintained; prepare a list of resources available; ensure they are familiar with their profession's specific code of ethics and other ethical frameworks and complete a self-assessment of your skills and competencies that may be needed during a pandemic.

Occupational therapists should take proactive steps now to develop a plan and ensure that resources are in place for themselves and their families.

**Please check the College website [www.cotns.ca](http://www.cotns.ca) for updates on the H1N1 Pandemic and additional resources.**

## COTNS NEWS

### 2009 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

On June 20, 2009, NSSOT and COTNS held joint annual meetings prefaced by a workshop by Shelley Wallace titled "Body Lingo". College membership has doubled over the past ten years. COTNS is one of the fastest growing OT Colleges in Canada. With this growth has come an increase in inquiries both from the public and the membership with an average of 15 telephone inquiries per month.

The year 2008-09 saw progress in several key strategic areas. The Human Resource Policy was revised, a staff salary review was undertaken and succession planning discussed.

There is an increased demand for accountability. With new legislation, namely Fair Regulation Processes Act (FaRPA) and Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT), it has become necessary to review our registration regulations to ensure the process is not only transparent but also does not produce barriers for mobility. Work with the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) continued as did involvement with the Nova Scotia Health Professions Network.

The Continuing Competency Committee was very active in developing the Self-Assessment and Professional Development Plan documents for the Continuing Competency Portfolio. These documents have since been distributed to all members and the plan is to hold sessions around the province as was done when the portfolio was initially launched.

A Credentials Committee was struck and they are currently reviewing policies and procedures related to registration.

There are currently 2 Practice Committees; one based in Cape Breton and the other in Halifax. The Cape Breton group have been reviewing the CAOT guidelines on the use of support personnel and revising the current practice guidelines, while the Halifax group are working towards re-examining the code of ethics and have also been answering practice questions from the membership.

Financially, the budget surplus decreased in 2008-09 and in 2009-10, it is expected to be non-existent. Ongoing and upcoming needs that will require funds include on-line registration, website updates, technical and computer requirements, increased office space and human resource needs.

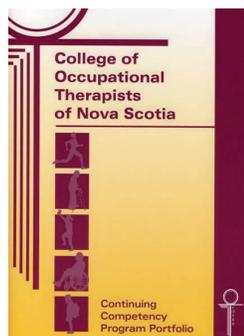
The membership questioned how the College could engage retired OT's within the province as they have a large contribution to make. An Ad Hoc Committee was suggested to discuss this challenge.

A debate ensued regarding the day of the AGM, that is, a weekday versus a Saturday and pros and cons were voiced for both. It was voiced that having joint AGM's was valuable and an educational component is essential to maintain the numbers in attendance. It was agreed to alternate between weekday and weekend meetings in the future.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tentative date for the 2010 Annual General Meeting for the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia and the Nova Scotia Society of Occupational Therapists is set for Friday, June 18th, 2010. Time to be announced!

**Please mark your calendars!**



## CONTINUING COMPETENCY

### Continuing Competency Program:

By now, you would have received Section 2 of your Continuing Competency Portfolio – Assessment and Professional Development Plan, which was distributed in July 2009. It is hoped that you have had an opportunity to review the information and have started to complete your Self-Assessment.

Maintaining your Continuing Competency Portfolio is a mandatory licensing requirement in accordance with regulation changes passed by the Government of Nova Scotia in June 2007. According to the regulations, all therapists have to declare on their annual registration form that they are participating in the Continuing Competency Program which includes completing a Self-Assessment. You will be required to make this declaration in 2010 as part of the renewal process.

You are strongly encouraged to start working on your Self-Assessment, if you have not already started. Start today to ensure your completion of the Self-Assessment requirement before the 2010 registration period.

#### Tips on Completing Your Self-Assessment:

- ◆ Start by reviewing the **Guide** - Assessment of Current Practice and Professional Development Plan
- ◆ Familiarize yourself with the Rating Scale – page 5 of the guide or page 1 of the Self-Assessment Tool
- ◆ Familiarize yourself with the Self-Assessment Tool

Spend some time to reflect on your practice:

- ◆ Who are your clients?
- ◆ What do you offer?
- ◆ How do you offer what you offer?
- ◆ What outcomes or results do you see as a result of what you offer?
- ◆ What regulations/legislations inform and guide what you offer and/or how you behave or interact with others?
- ◆ Seek feedback from colleague, co-worker or peer using the Peer/colleague/co-worker Feedback Form
- ◆ Start your Self-Assessment early – you may want to set aside an hour each time to work on your Self-Assessment—even completing each Competency Unit at a time
- ◆ Organize learning/peer support sessions in your work area to facilitate completion of your Self-Assessment.

Visit the website to download the writeable version of the Tool. The link is [http://www.cotns.ca/self\\_assessment\\_tool.html](http://www.cotns.ca/self_assessment_tool.html)

#### Updates:

#### Consultation and Education Sessions:

The Continuing Competency Committee and the COTNS Board are pleased to announce that they will be holding series of education sessions in each Region. The focus of the education/consultation will be to educate and inform members about the Continuing Competency Program and other College matters. Detailed information and dates will be circulated soon. If you want to host a specific education session in your area of practice, please contact the College for arrangement.

### Continuing Competency E-Bulletin:

The Continuing Competency Committee is pleased to announce the launching of a bi-monthly E-Bulletin for the Continuing Competency Program. The purpose of the e-bulletin is to keep members informed about continuing competency resources, FAQ, and announcement/developments relating to the Continuing Competency Program. The first issue of the bulletin will be circulated around the second week of December 2009. If you have a question, comments, announcement, or resource information/ link that you could like to share, please forward to Dorothy Edem at [daedem@eastlink.ca](mailto:daedem@eastlink.ca)

Stay tuned for further news as the Continuing Competency Program continues to evolve. The committee will continue to maintain communication with members. If you have questions or feedback, please contact Dorothy Edem through e-mail at [daedem@eastlink.ca](mailto:daedem@eastlink.ca).

Submitted by Dorothy Edem

Continuing Competency Program Coordinator

### CONTINUING COMPETENCY COMMITTEE

Dorothy Edem— Coordinator

Joanne Comeau

Karen Landry

Jennifer Saunders

Susan Sparkes

### Did you know?

The College recently performed a test of half of its email addresses. There was a small number of bounce backs. This means there are some people who would not receive information if it were sent out electronically. It is becoming increasingly important for the College to be able to send out mass emails to keep its members informed.

Each year, on your renewal form, the College asks for your email address. It is needed EVERY YEAR, EVEN IF IT HAS NOT CHANGED.

If you know you did not provide yours this spring, or if your email address CHANGES, please let us know by phone, email, or snail mail

Phone: 455-0556  
or  
1-877-455-0556 (NS only)

Email: [admin@cotns.ca](mailto:admin@cotns.ca)

Mail: 7001 Mumford Road  
Halifax Shopping Centre  
Box 11  
Halifax, NS B3L 2H8

### IMPORTANT!

Please ensure that you keep your College Membership Card onsite with you at all times, as it should be available to show clients upon their request. Occupational therapists who visit offsite clients should carry their card with them. A copy of your registration materials should be kept in your portfolio

## COTNS NEWS

### **BOARD MEMBERS**

Leticia Richer—Chair  
Phyllis Williams—Vice Chair  
Christine Marchessault—  
Treasurer  
Krista Cullen—Secretary  
Victoria Apold—Appointed

### **PRACTICE COMMITTEE - HALIFAX**

Denise Bond—Chair  
Jennifer Finlayson  
Jo-Anna Halfyard  
Jen Davis  
Jennifer Saunders  
Kristy Spear  
Jocelyn Brown—Resource

### **PRACTICE COMMITTEE - CAPE BRETON**

Angela Stairs—Chair  
Karen Boudreau  
Amanda Burlock  
Leslie Greencorn  
Raylene Morykot  
Lorna O'Grady  
Sheila Poulton

### **CREDENTIALS COMMITTEE**

Nancy Littler—Chair  
Nicole Boudreau  
Scott Thieu  
Tracy Vigliarolo

### **RENEWAL 2009**

Again, the staff of the College would like to thank registrants for their assistance in providing the necessary information to the College to allow full participation in the Canadian Institute of Health Information National Occupational Therapy Database. This, the second year, went very well.

Once again, the College will be making changes to its database in this upcoming year. This will be the first step to online renewal and continuing competence. We hope to have online renewal in place by April 2011.

### **Surrendered in good standing (by request)**

In accordance with our Act, the following individuals surrendered their license with the College:

#### **May 31, 2009:**

Kala Bixby  
Kathleen Drysdale  
Gillian Locke  
Lauren Monette  
Kathryn Parsons  
Melissa Patriquin  
Aimee Prince  
Heather Thompson  
Jennifer Whyte

#### **August 31, 2009:**

Nadine Andrea  
Julie Brown  
Megan Connors  
Nancy Fitzpatrick  
Gina Hanley  
Jennifer Scott  
Theresa Tai-MacArthur

All individuals named must apply and have their registration reinstated by the College before resuming use of title of occupational therapist and resuming practice in Nova Scotia.

LEGAL UPDATES

**Duty to Report Child Abuse**

Under the Nova Scotia *Children and Family Services Act*, S.N.S. 1990., c.5, there are three separate provisions with potential application to occupational therapists in their professional duties. All three create a potential duty to report.

First, every person who has information that a child is in need of protective services is under a duty to forthwith report that information to an agency (s. 23 (1)).

Further, every person who has information that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered third party abuse (abuse by a person other than a parent or guardian) shall forthwith report the information to an agency (s. 25(2)).

Thirdly, every professional who, in the course of his or her professional or official duties, has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is or may be suffering or may have suffered abuse shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to an agency. The definition of “professional” would almost certainly apply to an occupational therapist (s. 24(2)).

All of these provisions apply even though the information in question may be confidential or privileged. No action lies against the person who reports this information.

Failure to comply with these requirements constitutes an offence under the Act with potential penalties of up to \$5000, one years imprisonment, or both.

When faced with a potential duty to report situation it can sometimes create a moral dilemma for professionals. However, the legal requirement is relatively clear in most cases and typically there will be a positive duty to report. If particular circumstances seem unclear, it is suggested that practitioners seek individual legal advice.

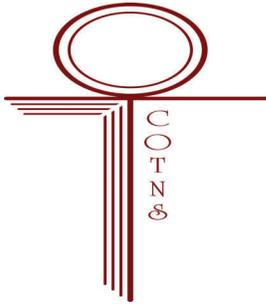
**Apology Act**

On October 1, 2009, the Nova Scotia *Apology Act*, S.N.S. 2008, c. 34 was proclaimed into force and Nova Scotia joined six other provinces with apology legislation. Similar legislation is also in place in some 35 states in the United States.

The basic effect of the act is that an “apology” (defined to mean an expression of sympathy or regret, a statement that one is sorry or any other words or actions indicating contrition or commiseration) cannot be used as evidence in legal proceedings to establish fault or liability. The intention of the act is to encourage people to apologize for their errors without worrying about having their statements used against them in civil court.

In jurisdictions with similar legislation it is believed that these laws have been helpful in bringing people together to resolve conflicts and in reducing lawsuits.

Nova Scotia Justice Minister Ross Landry stated in a release: "Apologizing has become an important part of our culture," and further indicated that the act is significant for health-care providers who will now be able to express remorse to families without putting themselves in legal jeopardy.



**COLLEGE OF OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPISTS OF NOVA SCOTIA**

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819**

**Box 11, HALIFAX, NS B3L 2H8**

**Tel: (902) 455-0556 OR**

**1-877-455-0556 (NS only)**

**Fax: (902) 455-0621**

**Email: [admin@cotns.ca](mailto:admin@cotns.ca)**

**Visit our website**

**[www.cotns.ca](http://www.cotns.ca)**

**OFFICE STAFF**

**Gayle Salsman      Registrar**

**Joy Moulton      Office Manager**

**OFFICE HOURS**

**Monday—Thursday**

**9 am—2 pm**

**REMINDERS**

**UPDATE THE COLLEGE!**

Each member is required to update the College of a change to any information contained on their annual registration forms. These may include:

1. Change of Home Address or Phone
2. Change of Employment Information
3. Change of Practicing Status
4. Change of e-mail address
5. Change of Name

Please note that while the College shares office space with NSSOT, we act as separate and distinct entities. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the individual OT to update both offices of information changes as required.

**BOARD MEETINGS**

Members of the College are permitted to attend any Board meetings if they call in advance so room may be made available to accommodate them.

Board meetings are scheduled for:

Saturday, December 5, 2009, from 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, January 30, 2010, from 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**GET INVOLVED**

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**