COTNS Continuing Competency Portfolio Usefulness Supported by Survey Results

In 2007, the College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia (COTNS) introduced registrants to the first component of the Continuing Competency Program - the Continuing Competency Portfolio and the requirement that all occupational therapists registered to practice in Nova Scotia must develop and maintain a professional portfolio. All components of the portfolio were implemented in 2009.

In December 2011, the Continuing Competency Committee developed and administered the COTNS Continuing Competency Portfolio Evaluation Survey to registrants to determine the effectiveness of the portfolio in fostering competency reflection and professional development. The survey also asked registrants their opinion on the use of electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) and learning modules as part of the Continuing Competency Program.

The survey was distributed to all registered therapists in Nova Scotia. The response rate was 26.14%.

The survey results show about 60% of the respondents see value in maintaining the continuing Competency Portfolio and about 50% reported they had a positive learning experience with the portfolio. Some of the respondents - about 41% felt having the portfolio does not help with lifelong learning and professional development. They further added that as occupational therapists they would engage in ongoing professional development anyway.

Overall, respondents support the development of an electronic portfolio and learning modules. However, they expressed the need
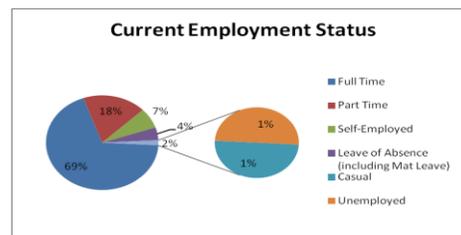
The Participants:

About 440 occupational therapists received an invitation to participate in the online survey. 115 (26.14%) participated. The demographic information as follows:
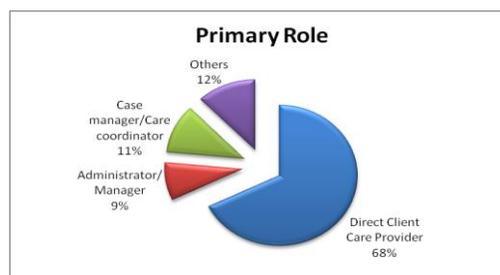
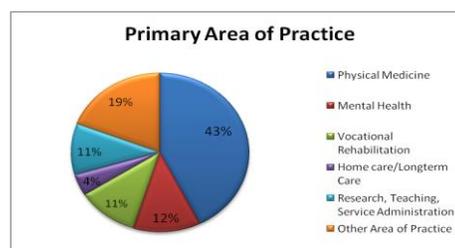Age: Majority is within 31-40 age group.
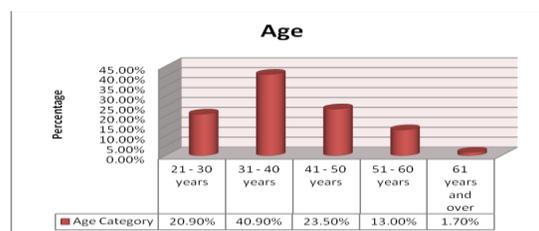
Employment Status: 69% are full time employed

Primary Role: 68% are direct client care providers.

Practice Area: 43% practice in physical medicine.

Survey Questionnaire and Administration

The notification of the survey was emailed to all registrants - inviting them to share their experience using the portfolio over the past years. Participants were given the option of completing the Survey online or use hard copy and fax or mail completed survey to the College.

Participants were asked to rate statements from strongly disagree to strongly agree that addressed portfolio development process, usefulness of the portfolio and future consideration for Continuing Competency Portfolio. The responses were further grouped in three categories: Agreed (strongly agreed and agreed); Not Sure: Disagreed (strongly disagreed and disagreed).

Results:

Value of Portfolio Creation:

About 92.3% of respondents agreed that the portfolio helped with pulling together important document in one place for easy access. About 50% agreed the portfolio helped in identifying strengths and setting goals for professional development and 62% agreed that it helped in creating a learning plan to achieve identified goals. About 45% of respondents disagreed with the statement that "creating a professional portfolio helped with reflective thinking skills" and about half (49.51%) disagreed with the statement "I have made changes in my practice as a result of my learning activities".

Some additional comments on the value of the portfolio include:

"Overall, completing the portfolio was a positive experience. It is very well laid out and COTNS provides great resources to assist in the completion".

"I have not noticed any changes in my professional practice, but I do see the portfolio as a way to keep everything organized in one place for easy access."

"While I support a competency portfolio in general, I believe improvements could be made to ensure efficient use of time for professional development aimed to increase practice skills".

"Very labour intensive and repetitive. Overall unhappy with the concept of continuing competency portfolio - time consuming and not very beneficial".
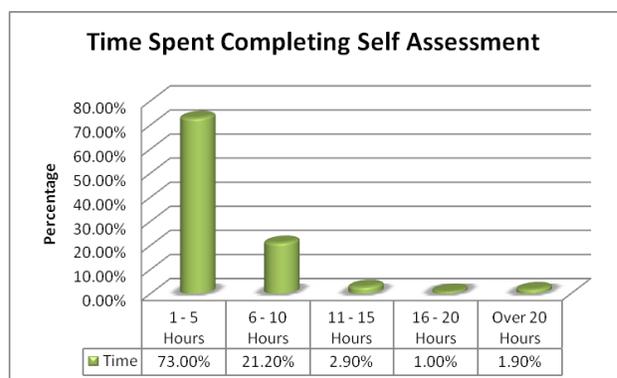
Time Commitment: Putting Together the Portfolio:

50% reported it took 1 - 5 hours; 33.7% reported 6-10 hrs; 9.6% reported 10-15 hrs; about 6.7% reported over 16 hours.
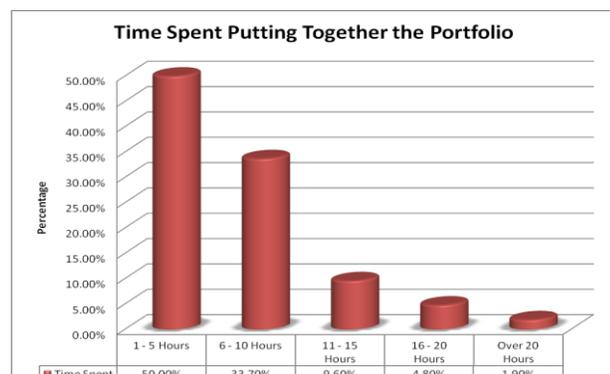
Time Commitment: Completing Self Assessment:

73.0% reported it took 1 - 5 hrs; 21.2% reported 6-10 hrs; 2.9% reported 10-15 hrs; about 2.9% reported over 16 hrs

Time Spent Putting Together the Portfolio

	1 - 5 Hours	6 - 10 Hours	11 - 15 Hours	16 - 20 Hours	Over 20 Hours
Time Spent	50.00%	33.70%	9.60%	4.80%	1.90%

Time Spent Completing Self Assessment

	1 - 5 Hours	6 - 10 Hours	11 - 15 Hours	16 - 20 Hours	Over 20 Hours
Time	73.00%	21.20%	2.90%	1.00%	1.90%

General Uses of Portfolio:

About 95% of respondents indicated that they use the portfolio to meet COTNS requirements. Documenting or saving examples of professional activities 59.60% and annual performance review 25.0%. Only few respondents (16.4%, n=17) reported using the portfolio for career development.

Uses of Portfolio

Category	Percent
Other use (please specify)	2.90%
As a reminder to review my resume	32.70%
Documenting or saving examples of professional...	59.60%
Applying for scholarships, grants or awards	1.00%
Applying for teaching positions	2.90%
Applying for graduate education program	1.00%
Applying for continuing education support	3.80%
Applying for career advancements	7.70%
Annual performance review	25.00%
To meet COTNS requirement	95.20%

Use of Portfolio in Changing Jobs:

About 23.5% of respondents reported use of the portfolio in changing jobs. Of those who had changed jobs only about 25% agreed the portfolio helped in better understanding of career goals, searching for jobs, or preparing for job interviews. Overall, over 65% disagreed on the usefulness of the portfolio in changing jobs

Future Consideration for Continuing Competency Portfolio: Electronic Portfolio

Members were asked about possible ways to improve the Continuing Competency Portfolio such as use of Electronic Portfolio (ePortfolio) and online Learning Modules.

Survey findings reflect that 54.9% of respondents support an electronic portfolio as an alternate to paper based; 25.5% are not sure and 19.68 disagree with an e-Portfolio. About 46.6% of respondents supported the use of both electronic and paper based; 28.9% were "Not Sure" and 26.7% not in support of use of both.

Some additional Comments include:

"Great idea. I think it is a great idea to do an ePortfolio. It makes it not only more accessible but easier to access as well." Great idea! My portfolio is overflowing with paper". "I am a fan of most online and electronic"

"There are documents that are collected along the way - paper and online portfolio comb may be the best option". "I still find the easiest access is to have pen/paper. It is more transportable and the way, my brain learned. However I recognize the value of on-line"

"I think it would be great if there were an online system for managing one's portfolio (sending out reminders for goals or upcoming deadlines)".

Future Consideration for Continuing Competency Portfolio: Learning Modules

Over 64% of respondents support the development of an online learning module as an additional component to the Continuing Competency Program. Only about 11% respondents were not in agreement and 24.3% were not sure.

About 64% agreed with the statement that access to online learning modules will help them in meeting professional development requirements. 24.3% were not sure and 11.7% disagree.

Some additional Comments:

"I love the idea of available opportunities for on-line learning. Hopefully we'd be able to print a certificate of completion with it for our "paper""

"I support this idea, and it would be interesting to have a discussion forum for therapists to post suggested topics for modules".

"Please ask Dalhousie to help with this-- we have expertise in development of online learning".

"I would like to see a choice of modules -to allow you to tailor the modules to best fit your practice". Alternatively a basic review of OT principles that are key to OT in general"

Next Step:

The continuing Competency Committees will use the feedback from members to further develop and improve the Continuing Competency Program

- o Revision of the self assessment tool
- o Explore an E-Portfolio
- o Explore development of learning modules

Acknowledgement:

The Continuing Competency Committee would like to thank the occupational therapists who took the time to complete the survey. Thank You.

"Overall, the investment in time in creating and maintaining portfolio is well worth the value it provides".