



January Newsletter

International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation

Welcome to the newsletter from the International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR)!

The goal of this newsletter is to appraise the members and stakeholders of the ICDR as well as the wider Rehabilitation Sciences Sector community of ongoing activities.

In this issue:

- *The ICDR-Trinidad celebrates 20 years of partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association (TTOTA)*
- *The ICDR-Ethiopia shares their news on graduating SLP students*
- *ICDR India welcomes Drs Duncan and Nowrouzi-Kia to explore mobility solutions for children and build networks in India*

Andrea Duncan, PhD
ICDR Co-director, Education

Tim Bressmann, PhD
ICDR Co-director, Research

ICDR Trinidad: Celebrating 20 years of partnership with the Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association

Author: ICDR Trinidad and Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy (OT) Association

2024 marked the 20-year anniversary of the establishment of the **Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association (TTOTA)**. Celebratory events have been held in Trinidad over the past few months and will continue into 2025.

ICDR Trinidad has been fortunate to have developed and sustained an enduring partnership with TTOTA in the development of the field of Occupational Therapy. The following highlights achievements we have accomplished together, shown as both an infographic and text: Therapy. The following highlights achievements we have accomplished together:

List of the abbreviations used in the text

Uof T: University of Toronto
TTOTA: Trinidad and Tobago Occupational Therapy Association
WFOT: World Federation of Occupational Therapists
ICDR: International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation
OT: Occupational Therapy / Occupational Therapist
USC: University of the Southern Caribbean

- In 2001, the University of Toronto sent our first two students to Trinidad and Tobago on a clinical placement with the Immortelle Children's Centre in Port of Spain, Trinidad. At the time, there were just four Occupational Therapists practicing in the country.

2001

FIRST STEPS

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2004

FOUNDED IN 2004

In 2004, TTOTA was founded, started by the core group of Occupational Therapists practicing in Trinidad and Tobago. That same year, the International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR) was created, with U of T's relationship with Trinidad and Tobago forming the basis for a country based working group.

Since 2004, TTOTA has provided exceptional connections to U of T OT students throughout their placements, including being invited to attend meetings and on occasion participated in PR events.

2006

PLACEMENTS STARTED

In approximately 2006, a University of Toronto Master's of Public Health fieldwork placement was completed with Lesley Garcia (President of TTOTA) and Deb Cameron (Trinidad Working Group member and Professor at U of T). The placement involved conducting a needs assessment for rehabilitation services in Trinidad and Tobago.

The final report helped to demonstrate the need for 250 OTs in the country. It also supported the justification of the establishment of a local OT education program.

Deb Cameron has been a key supporter of the establishment of this local OT educational program, initially at the University of Trinidad and Tobago, and, later, at the University of the Southern Caribbean (USC).

- Shortly thereafter, in 2004, TTOTA was founded, started by the core group of Occupational Therapists practicing in Trinidad and Tobago. That same year, the International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation (ICDR) was created, with U of T's relationship with Trinidad and Tobago forming the basis for a country-based working group.
- TTOTA has certainly grown since this time! TTOTA now has 40 members. In 2012, TTOTA was formally approved by WFOT as an associate member, subsequently receiving full member status in 2016. Lesley Garcia was the founding President of TTOTA and remains involved with the executive committee.
- Since 2004, TTOTA has provided exceptional connections to U of T OT students throughout their placements, including being invited to attend meetings and, on occasion, participating in PR events. ICDR Trinidad has found opportunities to support TTOTA initiatives, including funding an initial promotional banner and assisting with the President of TTOTA's attendance at WFOT in 2010 in Santiago, Chile, as a substitute Representative for the Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapy.

2010

PROMOTION OF TTOTA

ICDR Trinidad has found opportunities to support TTOTA initiatives, including funding an initial promotional banner and assisting with the President of TTOTA attendance at WFOT in 2010 in Santiago, Chile as substitute Representative for Association of Caribbean Occupational Therapy.

2012

TTOTA APPROVAL

In 2012, TTOTA was formally approved by WFOT as an associate member

Lesley Garcia was the founding President of TTOTA and remains involved with the executive committee.

TTOTA BURSARY

TTOTA established the TTOTA Rosemary Green bursary in 2012 and have since provided approximately \$16,000 in bursary support to 7 OT students at the USC.

2015

In 2015 U of T OT faculty members Deb Cameron and Helene Polatajko, and McMaster faculty member Sue Baptiste and WFOT member Kit Sinclair provided some hybrid training to TTOTA clinicians to prepare them for roles as clinical instructors for this USC OT program. USC's OT program just began it's 6th cohort in September 2024!

2016

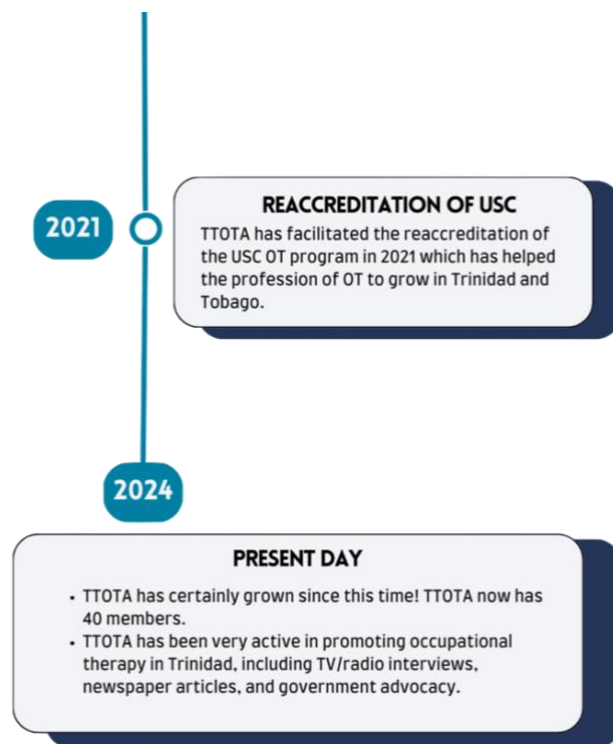
FULL MEMBER STATUS

In 2016, TTOTA was formally approved by WFOT as a full member

ACCREDITATION OF USC

TTOTA has facilitated the accreditation of the USC OT education program in 2016

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- TTOTA has been very active in promoting occupational therapy in Trinidad, including TV/radio interviews, newspaper articles, and government advocacy. TTOTA also established the TTOTA Rosemary Green bursary in 2012 and has since provided approximately \$16,000 in bursary support to 7 OT students at the USC. Additionally, TTOTA has facilitated the accreditation of the USC OT education program in 2016 and reaccreditation in 2021, which has helped the profession of OT grow in Trinidad and Tobago.



TTOTA has expressed strong gratitude for the camaraderie, collaborations, and professional links with ICDR members over the past 20 years. It will be exciting to see the continued partnership that will unfold in the years to come.

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ICDR Ethiopia: First Master's in Speech-Language Pathology Graduating class in Ethiopia

Marci Rose, MscOT OT Reg. (Ont.)

The first batch of Master's in Speech-Language Therapy (SLP) students in Ethiopia graduated on **July 6, 2024.**

This historic milestone was achieved through the hard work, dedication, and perseverance of the 17 students. They have paved the way for their personal and professional success while also setting a powerful precedent for the future of speech-language therapy in Ethiopia.

By embarking on this journey, the Master's graduates have not only equipped themselves with the skills and knowledge to make a significant impact but also inspired future generations to follow in their footsteps. This achievement is a monumental step forward for the healthcare system in Ethiopia. The presence of skilled speech-language therapists will profoundly enhance the accessibility and quality of care available to those in need.



“Their work will help bridge critical gaps in healthcare, ensuring that more people receive the specialized support they require.”

As pioneers in this field, the inaugural graduates have the unique opportunity to shape the future of speech-language therapy in Ethiopia. Their insights, experiences, and innovations will be invaluable as the program continues to be developed and refined. With the support of faculty from UofT and the Toronto Addis Ababa Academic Collaboration, the Master's program at AAU ensures that students can receive the best skills and training to move forward in their careers.

The entire community looks forward to witnessing the positive changes their contributions will bring to advance healthcare in Ethiopia.

ICDR India: Exploring Mobility Solutions and Building Bridges in India

Dr. Andrea Duncan, PhD & Dr. Behdin Nowrouzi-Kia, PhD

In November 2024, Drs. Andrea Duncan and Behdin Nowrouzi-Kia, along with Franzina Coutinho, Director of Research, and Ramasubramanian Ponnusamy, Director of Rehab from Amar Seva Sangam and Doss Prakash, Professor, Mahatma Gandhi Mission University, embarked on a transformative 15-day research trip in India. The goal of this trip was to advance the understanding of mobility needs for children with disabilities and foster international collaborations that address critical challenges in disability and rehabilitation.



The cornerstone of the trip was data collection for the project *Children with Disabilities in India: A Needs Analysis*. The goal is to inform the needs and future considerations for the design of an innovative pediatric walker that works for children in India. The research team conducted nine focus groups and six individual interviews across Mumbai, Aurangabad, Ayikudy, and Chennai to build evidence on this topic. The participants included over 40 clinicians, orthotists, and vendors, who shared invaluable insights about barriers and enablers to mobility solutions in India.

“The goal is to inform the needs and future considerations for the design of an innovative pediatric walker that works for children in India.”

Building Research and Educational Collaborations

The trip also served as a platform for forging partnerships with some of India's leading academic institutions. **Meetings with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and Madras provided valuable insights into how product ideas transition from conceptualization to testing to commercialization.** These discussions highlighted the critical role of interdisciplinary collaboration in bringing assistive technologies to market.

At Mahatma Gandhi Mission (MGM) University in Aurangabad, the team engaged in a full day of meetings with senior leaders, including the CEO, Secretary, Registrar, Dean of Medicine, and Head of Physiotherapy. Their discussions explored potential collaborations in research and education, particularly in occupational therapy and rehabilitation sciences.

The visit captured the attention of the local Maharashtra newspaper.

छत्रपती संभाजीनगर, बुधवार, २० नोव्हेंबर २०२४  8

एमजीएम-टोरंटो विद्यापीठात सामंजस्य करार

फिजिओथेरेपी कॉलेजमध्ये दिव्यांग बालकांसाठी वॉकर संशोधनाचा प्रकल्प

सकाळ वृत्तसेवा

छत्रपती संभाजीनगर, ता. १९ : एमजीएम ट्रस्ट आणि टोरंटो विद्यापीठ यांच्यात शैक्षणिक आणि संशोधनात्मक सामंजस्य करार करण्यात आला. एमजीएम फिजिओथेरेपी महाविद्यालय आणि टोरंटो विद्यापीठ, कॅनडा यांच्या सहकार्याने दिव्यांग बालकांसाठी वॉकर विकसित करण्याच्या संशोधन प्रकल्पासाठी सोमवारी (ता. १८) टोरंटो विद्यापीठातील संतोषक डॉ. ऑड्रिया डॅकन आणि डॉ. बेहेदिन नोरोजी-किया यांनी संस्थेला भेट दिली.

हा प्रकल्प एमजीएम फिजिओथेरेपी महाविद्यालय छत्रपती संभाजीनगर, अमर सेवा संघ, अय्यक्कुडी (तामिळनाडू), आणि टोरंटो विद्यापीठ यांच्या वतीने राबविण्यात येत आहे. या प्रकल्पाचा उद्देश भारतातील दिव्यांग मुलांसाठी किफायतशीर, हलका आणि मजबूत वॉकर तयार करणे आहे, ज्यामुळे दैनंदिन जीवनात चांगले सपोर्ट जाईल. या अभ्यासाद्वारे, दिव्यांगंसाठी वॉकर उत्कृष्टतेतील अडचणी, त्यांच्या खर्च आणि वॉकरची कार्यक्षमता यांचीचा अभ्यास करून, याला निर्माण होणाऱ्या अडचणींना दूर करून विशेष गरज असलेल्या मुलांची कार्यक्षमता सुधारण्यावर भर दिला जाणार आहे.

टोरंटो विद्यापीठातील संतोषकडॉ. एमजीएम ट्रस्टचे उपाध्यक्ष डॉ. पी.एम. जाधव, सचिव अंकुशराव कदम, डॉ. प्रवीण सूर्यवंशी, कुलसचिव डॉ. आशिष गाडेकर यांची भेट घेतली. या बैठकीत सदरील प्रकल्पाचे उद्दिष्ट आणि विविध टप्पे यावर सखोल चर्चा करण्यात आली; तसेच या प्रकल्पासाठी विलस सरकाळ आणि कुलसचिव डॉ. आशिष गाडेकर यांची भेट घेतली. या बैठकीत सदरील प्रकल्पाचे उद्दिष्ट प्रेरणा दळवी यांची प्रमुख उपस्थिती होती.

एमजीएम ट्रस्ट आणि टोरंटो विद्यापीठ यांच्यात शैक्षणिक आणि संशोधनात्मक सामंजस्य करार करण्यात आला. यावेळी प्रेरणा दळवी यांची प्रमुख उपस्थिती होती.

आंतरराष्ट्रीय परिसंवाद आयोजित

एमजीएम फिजिओथेरेपी संस्थेच्या अंतर्गत गुणवत्ता कक्षाने परिश्रम घेऊन आंतरराष्ट्रीय परिसंवादाचे यशस्वी आयोजन केले. 'सिडनातून गुणवत्तापूर्ण सार्व : अंतरराष्ट्रीय सहकार्याद्वारे विविध आरोग्यविषयक आव्हानांना सामोरे जाणे' या विषयावर परिसंवादामध्ये डॉ. बेहेदिन नोरोजी-किया आणि डॉ. ऑड्रिया डॅकन या मान्यवरांनी व्याख्यान दिले. या सत्रामध्ये 'काम करण्याची क्षमता, आजारांनंतर कामावर पुन्हा कन्ू होणे आणि जटिल अर्पणत्व व्यवस्थापन या विषयांवर आंतरराष्ट्रीय दृष्टिकोन यावर चर्चा झाली.

अभ्यास गट चर्चा, विषेश सत्रांचा भाग

प्रकल्पाअंतर्गत, नियोजित अभ्यास गट आणि चर्चांच्या स्वरूपात माहिती गोळा करण्यात आली. ज्यामध्ये, शैक्षणिक व व्यवसायिक पारदर्शनी असलेले विविध फिजिओथेरेपिस्ट्स, वॉकर उत्पादक तसेच काही प्रिन्सिपल आणि ऑर्गिनाइटर यांच्याशी ऑनलाइन चर्चा झाली.



A highlight of the visit to MGM was the international symposium in which Dr. Behdin Nowrouzi-Kia and Dr. Andrea Duncan spoke to students and faculty about the latest research on vocational rehabilitation, return to work, and managing wicked problems in health care.

Engaging with Amar Seva Sangam (ASSA)

The team's visit to Amar Seva Sangam in Ayikudy was another impactful moment. The visit allowed the researchers from the University of Toronto to observe the amazing achievements of ASSA and develop plans for future research and educational activities. Dr. Nowrouzi-Kia presented to clinicians on the value of return to work and vocational rehabilitation, emphasizing the role these interventions play in enhancing independence and societal participation for individuals with disabilities.



The presentation and subsequent meetings sparked meaningful discussions about potential research and advances to ASSA's vocational rehabilitation program.

Looking Ahead

The next steps involve publishing two papers based on the data collected.

1. One paper will focus on the specific design needs for a pediatric walker in India
2. Another will explore the systemic factors affecting children's mobility in India.

The research team will also seek to work towards product solutions, along with technology partners, to support the development of a paediatric walker made in India for Indian children.



We would like to thank the University of Toronto India Foundation for the generous support of this research initiative.

Additionally, we would like to thank Amar Seva Sangam for the support of this particular research project, as well as years of collaboration and support of University of Toronto's International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation and the rehabilitation sector.

Lastly, we would like to thank Mahatma Gandhi Mission University for hosting a visit and planning for future educational and research initiatives.



UNIVERSITY OF
TORONTO

International Centre for Disability and Rehabilitation

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