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Dr. Barbara Hemphill

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Sponsor Profile: Dr. Barbara Hemphill



Dr. Barbara Hemphill, DMin., OTR, FAOTA, FMOTA, associate professor emeritus at Western Michigan University, is sponsoring the *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy's* Spring 2014 issue. Dr. Hemphill has been an enthusiastic member of the occupational therapy (OT) profession for 46 years. She envisions and shapes a strong future for the profession by engaging in a variety of clinical, teaching, service, and scholarship activities. Through sponsorship of the journal, Dr. Hemphill honors the inspirational OT practitioners and mentors with whom she interacted throughout her career, supports OT practitioners who are currently meeting the challenges of the OT profession through scholarly activities, and hopes to inspire students to dedicate themselves to innovative and fulfilling careers as OT practitioners.

Dr. Hemphill began her OT career after serving 3 years in the Navy Hospital Corps. During the time she was in OT school at the University of Iowa, she was required to complete four level II fieldwork experiences. Her fieldwork placements brought her across the country into several different practice areas, including rehabilitation in Birmingham, AL; mental health in Topeka, KS; physical disabilities at a VA hospital in Minneapolis, MN; and pediatrics in a state hospital in Denver, CO.

After receiving her OT degree in 1968, Dr. Hemphill worked first at Mount Airy Psychiatric Hospital in Denver, and then moved to Tucson, AZ, where she started the first clinical OT program at the University of Arizona Medical Center and was the Director of Activities Therapy at Palo Verde Psychiatric Hospital. Next, Dr. Hemphill moved to Fort Logan Hospital in Denver to work in one of the first community mental health centers in the country. During her years of clinical practice in mental health, she recognized the lack of OT-specific mental health assessments and the need for additional research and resources to support OT practice in mental health. Additionally, Dr. Hemphill supervised many fieldwork students and felt students needed better preparation for mental health practice. To address this need, she completed a Master's degree in OT at Colorado State University in 1976. Her Master's thesis, supervised by Dr. Mary Garfield, PhD, was titled "An experimental study in finger painting and mosaic tiling to aid the identification for the psychiatric patient". Her thesis supported the development of the B.H. Battery (Hemphill, 1982), an OT mental health evaluation tool. This degree also prepared her for a career in academia.

Dr. Hemphill left full-time clinical practice in 1975 and entered academia in the hope of impacting mental health practice through student education. Her first appointment was as an Assistant Professor at Cleveland State University, where she taught courses in mental health assessments and began to explore the idea of publishing a book on mental health assessments. In 1981 she was recruited to Western Michigan University's (WMU) OT Department where she served as an Assistant Professor, and then as an Associate Professor until her retirement in 1999.

While at WMU, she taught courses in research, mental health assessment, OT theory, administration, group process, activity analysis, and clinical skills. She published four textbooks and multiple scholarly articles on the subject of OT evaluation in mental health. Even after her retirement in 1999, she remains an active member of the WMU OT department, teaching courses and serving on multiple committees.

One of Dr. Hemphill's most significant contributions to the OT profession is her work related to OT mental health practice. Her commitment to OT practice in mental health led to multiple scholarly publications. She began this work by first identifying a lack of resources available for practitioners and students, and then she surveyed clinicians, educators, and fieldwork coordinators about which OT assessments they were using. Her first text, *The Evaluative Process in Psychiatric Occupational Therapy* (1982), included information about the most popular OT mental health assessments being used. Each chapter was written by the authors and designers of the assessment tool. This text was also translated into Japanese. A follow up to the text, *Mental Health Assessment in Occupational Therapy*, was published in 1988. In 1999, she published a third book in the series focused on mental health assessment, *Assessments in Occupational Therapy Mental Health: An Integrative Approach*. A second edition of this text was published in 2008.

Currently, Dr. Hemphill is co-editing a third edition of the text with Christine Urish, PhD, OTR/L. These texts have been designed to focus on important aspects of OT mental health evaluation by including assessments focused on OT only, having assessment authors write each chapter, focusing on assessments being used actively in practice and in educational settings, and presenting the evidence to support the

assessment but encouraging practitioners to evaluate the level of evidence appropriate to their setting. In addition to textbooks, Dr. Hemphill has published numerous scholarly articles and presented nationally on the topic of OT practice in mental health settings.

Dr. Hemphill accomplished many things during her formal career and she continues to influence the profession through participation in learning, service, and scholarship activities as a retiree. One goal she pursued and achieved in retirement was earning a Doctoral degree. She was able to explore her interests in spirituality and OT through earning a Doctor of Ministry degree from Ecumenical Theology Seminary in Detroit in 2004. Dr. Hemphill noted that spirituality, although considered an aspect of holism in OT, was rarely being addressed directly in education and practice. Her dissertation, "Spiritual Development of Occupational Therapy Students," explores the influence of teaching spirituality on OT student fieldwork. Her dissertation committee included Dr. Charles Kutz-Marks, a minister, Dr. Nancy Powell, an occupational therapist who helped ensure OT was integrated into the project, Dr. Douglas Tracy, an educator, and Dr. Kenneth Harris. She also graduated from the Systematic Theological Effective Ministry program at the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 2006. Her formal education, dissertation committee, and minister training helped her gain the theology and scholarship required but also the technical skills of ministry. Since completing her degree, she has been active in teaching spirituality-based courses in the community and at universities, running spiritual book clubs, teaching in her church, being an invited preacher, and serving on various boards related to ministry. Professionally, she

continues to pursue opportunities to link spirituality and OT. In 2010, as the chair of the AOTA Ethics Commission, she advocated for the inclusion of the concept of social justice in the AOTA Code of Ethics. She has also written a book chapter on occupations in the context of spirituality in the 4th edition of *The Texture of Life: Purposeful Activities in Occupational Therapy* (Hinojosa & Blunt, 2014), a popular OT textbook. Dr. Hemphill also has a text in publishing form titled "Spirituality for the common good: Theology of occupation."

In addition to her focus on spirituality in OT, Dr. Hemphill engages in other professional pursuits as well. She attends professional conferences and identifies that professional conferences have been pivotal to her career. At the first AOTA conference she attended in 1967 she met Helen Willard, BA, OTR, and author of the foundational text *Willard and Spackman's Occupation Therapy* (1947). She remembers meeting Gail Fidler, OTR, FAOTA at another conference early in her career. In a recent interview she described attending professional conferences and meeting inspirational OT leaders as "a life changer" and inspiring dedication and loyalty to the profession. Just as her mentors introduced her to leaders in the profession as a young professional, Dr. Hemphill has supported students to have the same experiences. She provides two endowments for students in WMU's OT program. The first endowment is designed to send students to a national conference, with priority given to students doing research in adult mental health. The second endowment provides funding for textbooks for students in need.

Throughout her OT career, Dr. Hemphill has identified areas in the OT profession that can be strengthened and has engaged in strategies to address them.

These have included gathering resources and later research to support OT practice in mental health; advocating for a holistic approach to practice, which includes spirituality; inspiring professional knowledge and values in students; and engaging in professional service through committee work. Her sponsorship of the *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* furthers her commitment. She indicated her motivations for sponsoring the journal include supporting authors who want to publish innovative research and articles that challenge the profession to grow. Additionally, she hopes that her support will encourage other OT practitioners to embark on a professional life that moves with the profession, just as she does.

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