



The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy

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Occupational Therapy

Summer 2020

Dr. Tatjana Tina Savich

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Recommended Citation

"Dr. Tatjana Tina Savich" (2020). *OJOT Sponsor Profiles*. 29.
<https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/sponsorprofiles/29>

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Sponsor Profile:

Dr. Tatjana Tina Savich



The Summer 2020 Special Issue of *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* is sponsored by Dr. Ben Atchison and features Dr. Tatjana Tina Savich, who is the founder of Quality Care Rehab and Autism Center (QCRAC). QCRAC is a premier provider of outpatient and in-home occupational, physical, and speech therapy and applied behavior analysis services in Macomb County in Michigan. Dr. Savich and her team of over 70 strive to help their patients “live life to the fullest.” She has created an environment that provides exceptional professional development opportunities for clinicians to practice in a highly diverse patient population. In addition to her strong and successful career as a businesswoman, Dr. Savich is a clinical assistant professor and capstone coordinator for the occupational therapy clinical doctoral program at the University of Michigan-Flint.

Born in Belgrade, Serbia (the former Yugoslavia), Dr. Savich and her parents immigrated to Windsor, Ontario, Canada, when she was 9 months old. Her parents were not fluent in English, yet they were fortunate to have acquired employment in the auto industry. Her father began as an assembly worker at Ford Motor Company and eventually became a skilled tradesman. Her mother’s skills as a seamstress allowed her to work on the specialty trim line at General Motors. Over time, the family acquired ownership of rental properties while simultaneously maintaining their full-time employment in the automotive industry. Dr. Savich’s parents assigned both her and her brother caretaking responsibilities of the properties while they were growing up, which taught them the importance of a strong work ethic. Despite observing their parents struggle with language barriers and dismissive acts by others, they were not deterred from the importance of “doing the right thing, acting with honesty, and working hard to achieve life goals.” Dr. Savich attributes her professional success to these important lessons that she learned as a child.

Following her completion of a Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Science, with honors, from the University of Windsor in Ontario, Canada, Dr. Savich decided to pursue a law degree with a goal of specializing in domestic violence. Her interest was motivated by her own personal experiences and a desire to help as many people as possible. As a single mother of two, she applied for and was placed on a waitlist to begin studies at the University of Windsor School of Law. In the interim, she explored other options and discovered the profession of occupational therapy. She decided to apply to the undergraduate program at Wayne State University (WSU) in Detroit and simultaneously re-applied to law school and was accepted to both programs. Weighing the opportunities that both programs offered,

she subsequently decided that a career in occupational therapy would allow her to impact the lives of many more people than would the law profession.

Following graduation from WSU with a Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy, Dr. Savich quickly transitioned from a staff occupational therapy position to manager of rehabilitation services at two skilled nursing facilities. Dr. Savich describes her pathway into private practice as one that was propelled by an experience in which she was significantly challenged by ethical dilemmas while managing a 335-bed skilled nursing facility. The pressure to ensure a high volume of productivity among her staff, with highly questionable practices to accomplish this challenge, finally led her to leave her position and join a colleague who she partnered with to develop and implement a private practice.

In 2002 she launched a private practice, Quality Care Rehabilitation Professionals, which was rebranded as Quality Care Rehab and Autism Center to reflect the mission of the company more accurately. In 2014, Dr. Savich entered into a partnership with Macomb County Mental Health through a county contract to provide Autism Care Services to children and adults on the spectrum. Services are provided to over 400 families in Macomb County, MI, across multiple client populations from toddlers to older adults with a variety of diagnoses. These families are served in multiple settings, including outpatient pediatrics, senior living communities, and home-based care.

Dr. Savich's business interests expanded in 2008 with the purchase of a Medicare A certified home health agency named Divinity Home Care. She partnered with her brother Alex Savich in this venture in which she focused on quality clinical services and regulatory compliance while Alex focused on business development and operations. Her decision to expand into this arena was driven by the demand she observed in Macomb County as the population began to age at an accelerated pace. This agency is now recognized as a preferred provider of skilled nursing, rehabilitation, social work, and home health aide services in Macomb County after providing service to thousands of homebound patients over the years. With the purchase of Divinity Homecare, they simultaneously also started Quality Private Care to meet the needs in two independent living communities to provide private care services, Medicare Part B Therapy, and Medicare Part A Home Care.

Dr. Savich again expanded her business in 2017 with entrance into the assisted living market, again partnering with her brother Alex, and joining forces with her husband Tracy to purchase Leisure Manor Residence for Seniors in Richmond, a 20-bed community, followed by the purchase of Angelica's Place of Romeo, a 23-bed home for the aged, in 2018. This facility provides senior care services around the clock to seniors who have dementia and other comorbidities that require 24/7 care. Her success in recruiting caregivers, nurses, therapists, and administrative teams to deliver "quality care" services led to an opportunity to start Divinity Care Services (DCS) in 2018. DCS provides nursing oversight to JARC, a not-for-profit organization that manages 30 adult foster care homes that house over 100 residents with cognitive and physical impairments. DCS nurses provide medication and other training to staff as well as attend specialist appointments, monitor care plans, and coordinate with pharmacists and doctors when there are resident status changes to ensure the best quality of life possible for the residents.

During the creation, development, and implementation of these many successful business initiatives, Dr. Savich managed to complete her Master of Health Administration degree at Central Michigan University, followed by being accepted in the Doctorate of Health Administration program at Central Michigan University. Dr. Savich had to put her progress through this program on hold because of treatment for cervical cancer. Nevertheless, she recovered, resumed her dissertation, and completed

the program, all while raising three young children as a single mother, until 2008 when she met and eventually married her husband, Tracy Stuart.

Dr. Savich's academic experience began by way of a part-time teaching assignment in the Department of Occupational Therapy at WSU that also led to her appointment as a member of the admissions committee. In this role, she had the opportunity to collaborate with Dr. Nancy Vandewiele-Milligan in the development of a business plan for a teaching clinic that became the Diabetic Education Wellness Clinic. This highly successful clinic included occupational therapy students as well as physical therapy and medical students, which led to the program being recognized with the 2012 WSU Applebaum Prism Prize for Innovation in Teaching Award. In addition to serving as an adjunct professor at WSU, Dr. Savich also extended significant time and energy to the program by serving as an academic fieldwork educator for several years, offering occupational therapy students many varied opportunities and challenges as well as employment following graduation.

Dr. Savich's commitment as a clinician, administrator, and businesswoman was magnified with the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring her to adjust clinical services, business operations, and financial structure in all of her companies. Implementation of expanded Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) use, telemedicine, and enhanced screening practices were a few of the key clinical changes required. Despite rigorous preventive measures and ongoing testing, as of the date of this interview (June 9, 2020) she has been challenged with managing staff, resident, and patient COVID-19 positive situations. Dr. Savich noted that the challenge of obtaining PPE was initially frustrating, and that as of June 1, 2020, her clinical team was able to implement PPE in-service training and resume services for COVID-19 positive patients in the home health care agency, as well as equip all of the caregiver staff with supplies to continue delivering 24/7 services to seniors in the AFC/HFA homes. In the outpatient therapy clinics, patients, families and all staff are monitored daily and social distancing was propelled by changing seating in clinical practice areas, increasing sanitization of all work spaces, and deep cleaning, which are now rituals before and after every patient visit.

Clearly, the professional experiences, knowledge, and skills that Dr. Savich acquired early in her career brings great credit to herself and will undoubtedly transform her doctoral students into well prepared, thoughtful, and motivated young professionals. The foundation laid by her parents that helped her develop and sustain a rock-solid work ethic that has benefited so many patients, family members, colleagues, and students in her professional community is truly an inspiration to our readers. We are indeed pleased to add her to the roster of sponsor profiles of *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*.