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Sharon A. Gutman, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

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Sponsor Profile:
Sharon A. Gutman, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA



The *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (OJOT) is pleased and honored to celebrate Dr. Sharon A. Gutman as the sponsor profile for the Winter 2022 issue of OJOT, funded by Dr. Diane Powers Dirette and Dr. Ben Atchison.

This sponsorship is especially meaningful to the OJOT team as Dr. Gutman is an actively contributing member of the OJOT advisory board who has excelled throughout her professional career in multiple roles as a clinician, educator, scholar, advocate, artist, and leader in the occupational therapy profession. Her substantial contributions to the profession were recently recognized when she was awarded the 2021 Eleanor Clark Slagle Lectureship from the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). She is a treasure to our profession, and we present this profile with the deepest pride and highest regard for our colleague and friend.

Dr. Gutman's contribution to the body of literature in occupational therapy can only be described as phenomenal. She has published 73 peer-reviewed journal articles, seven textbooks, 13 book chapters, five comprehensive continuing education courses, and 24 editorials as editor-in-chief of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* (AJOT). Notably, her body of peer-reviewed articles has been cited over 1,400 times, leading to an increased understanding of clinical practice with adults and youth with mental health concerns across varied populations. In her Slagle Lecture, "Working with Marginalized Populations" (2021), Dr. Gutman describes numerous clinical intervention studies directed toward marginalized populations in which she directly and actively engaged and participated as both an advocate and researcher. In every description, she consistently and generously cites both her professional colleagues and her students, who were so very fortunate to have had the opportunity to collaborate with her. Her in-depth review of each of the studies cited is a must read for every occupational therapist and occupational therapy student, and our readers are encouraged to include this seminal lecture in their professional library. It can be accessed at this link: [2021 Slagle Lecture \(aota.org\)](https://www.aota.org/2021-Slagle-Lecture).

Dr. Gutman's contributions to the education of occupational therapists through her seven major textbooks is substantial. Four of these books have been identified by AOTA as among the most commonly used resources in occupational therapy education programs across the country and internationally. Her best-known textbook, *Quick Reference Neuroscience for Rehabilitation Professionals*, currently going into its fourth edition, provides meaningful, easy to understand concepts of complex neuroanatomical and physiological foundations of occupational therapy practice. These concepts are made clearer by her exceptional written communication, and the excellent full-color illustrations are personally drawn by Dr. Gutman, an accomplished artist, adding to the appeal of this textbook and its accessibility to students at all

levels and disciplines, including physician assistants, respiratory therapists, athletic trainers, and physical therapy assistants.

In addition to this exceptional resource, Dr. Gutman's *Screening Adult Neurologic Populations: A Step-By-Step Instruction Manual* is also a widely adopted textbook in its third edition. It is the first resource to compile the most commonly used rehabilitation screening procedures and functional implications of impairment and is widely required and recommended reading in occupational therapy curricula, both nationally and internationally.

During Dr. Gutman's 6-year tenure as editor-in-chief of AJOT, she authored the textbook *Journal Writing and Publication: Your Guide to Mastering Clinical Health Care Reporting Standards*. Published in 2017, this book provides specific guidelines for manuscript preparation and serves to mentor a generation of junior faculty and doctoral students in the skills needed to disseminate knowledge.

As a result of her established record of successful textbook authorship, Dr. Gutman was selected, along with her co-editor, Dr. Diane Powers Durette, to assume the editing role of the seminal textbook *Occupational Therapy for Physical Dysfunction*. Originally authored by Dr. Catherine Trombly, this book has been the primary textbook for physical dysfunction courses in occupational therapy programs nationally and internationally since the 1970s. The eighth edition, edited by Dr. Powers Durette and Dr. Gutman, was published in 2020 with major updates, including a video library, new assessment and intervention content, and newly added clinical condition sections.

While Dr. Gutman's prolific record of significant and impactful contributions through her peer-reviewed scholarship and educational textbooks is widely recognized, she is perhaps best known for her editorship of AJOT between 2008–2014. Prior to her editorship, AJOT averaged an impact factor of 0.641 over the previous decade. Upon completion of her 6-year term as editor, the journal achieved an impact factor of 2.113, was ranked the Number 1 occupational therapy journal (of nine) and 19 of 66 among rehabilitation journals. Under her leadership, AJOT advanced into a respected research journal as a result of her dedication and commitment to increase the amount of published evidence. She engaged in active solicitation of manuscripts from the profession's most productive researchers as well as junior researchers in the beginning stages of their careers.

Growing up in a small suburb of Philadelphia, Dr. Gutman and her late-sister, Bonnie, were raised by Evelyn and Jesse Gutman, described by Dr. Gutman as "Depression-Era" parents who worked hard to give their children everything they had not experienced in their lives, including a comfortable, secure, and nicely furnished home. Recalling that her parents liked to take Sunday drives into Philadelphia, Dr. Gutman described family trips that took them through impoverished communities, leading to her early recognition of the socioeconomic disparity that clearly existed outside her daily life, facilitating a life-long commitment of advocacy for those without the advantages she experienced.

Following completion of her undergraduate degree in Psychology at Arcadia University in Philadelphia, Dr. Gutman was drawn to occupational therapy following an internship in art therapy where she had the opportunity to observe occupational therapy and heard the word "holistic" to describe the essence of the profession. She followed her interest by way of enrolling in the post-baccalaureate program in occupational therapy at Thomas Jefferson University where she was mentored by Dr. Ruth Schemm, who recognized Dr. Gutman's interest and potential for doctoral education, leading to her decision to enroll in the Ph.D. program in occupational therapy at New York University. During her time at NYU, she was mentored by Dr. Jim Hinojosa and Dr. Anne Mosey, who instilled a deep appreciation for the importance of evidence-

based practice, both in development of effective clinical interventions and best methods for determining outcomes of interventions.

In reflecting on influential experiences that shaped “thinking like an OT,” Dr. Gutman cited her first job experience at a long-term care center for persons with traumatic brain injury that included three distinct units. These included a skilled nursing facility focusing on significant physical and psychological concerns, a residential facility that provided long-term care, and a third setting that focused on independent living opportunities. It was in this context that she was able to apply what Dr. Gail Fidler, a pioneer in occupational therapy, had described as “authentic OT” in which the clients were engaged in everyday instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). This led to her career-long clinical and research interest in community-based practice with marginalized populations. These have included homeless adults with mental illness, premature aging conditions, and poor literacy; women who became homeless as a result of domestic violence; children in impoverished, urban school systems; and adults with severe and chronic mental illness.

In reflecting on significant historical events of the profession, Dr. Gutman notes the impact of World War I and the establishment of the Reconstruction Aides that led the way to the development of occupational therapy for the treatment of combat-related mental health disorders. While the original focus of intervention was on vocational re-education, the emergence of the emphasis on a medical model in World War II and into the 50s and 60s derailed the strong presence of occupational therapy from a major role in mental health rehabilitation to one that was more aligned with a focus on orthopedic rehabilitation and a medical model. Dr. Gutman describes the next major historical event as the deinstitutionalizing of psychiatric care in the 70s leading to the closure of many state institutions and the emergence of community-based living and health care for persons with mental illness. The lack of funding to match the mandate, however, resulted in the deterioration of a comprehensive team approach to care, essentially excluding the role of occupational therapy as an essential component of the mental health care team. In addition, the emergence of the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Act (PL 94-142) further shifted the emphasis of employment from psychiatric occupational therapy to school-based practice along with hospital settings. Finally, in the 90s, the paucity of traditional settings that focused on mental health rehabilitation necessitated a change in the educational requirements that every student complete a “psych” Level II fieldwork that further limited the presence of occupational therapy as a viable member of the mental health care team.

Describing the most significant “lessons learned” in her career, Dr. Gutman notes that a spirit of competition in academia has, at times, led to less effective collaboration. She notes, however, that in those experiences, when others share her value of a shared team approach, the outcome is always better for those she serves. By way of example, she cited the leadership of Dr. Sandra Rogers, the chair of the Occupational Therapy Doctoral Program in the Department of Rehabilitation and Movement Sciences at Rutgers University in Newark, NJ, where Dr. Gutman now serves as Professor of Occupational Therapy.

Finally, when asked about those professional accomplishments of which she is most proud, Dr. Gutman lists her editorship of AJOT, her textbook publications, and being selected for the 2021 Eleanor Clark Slagle Lectureship Award.

In this New Year of 2022, we extend the heartiest toast to our cherished colleague and express our deepest gratitude for all that she has done for our profession, for OJOT, and the many marginalized members of our society for whom she so authentically serves as an advocate through her dedicated clinical research.

References

Gutman, S. A. (2021). Working with marginalized populations, 2021 Eleanor Clarke Slagle lecture. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 75, 7506150010. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2021.756001>