

CAREER PATHS FOR OTs
Professional Issues Forum
25 July 2006
WFOT 2006 Congress

Forum facilitated by David O'Halloran and Alison Wicks.

Approximately 30 participants attended this forum.

At the beginning of the forum participants were asked to sit in groups with people they did not know, as a means of facilitating creative discussion. The basis of this request was that **dense networks**, or groups of people who are familiar to each other, are usually supportive and trusting but lack creativity. On the other hand, **sparse networks**, or groups in which the people are not familiar with each other, tend to be less trusting but more creative.

The discussion began with responses to the question **How did you get to be an OT?**
The various replies included:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Personal recommendation• Happenstance• Personal experience with disability• Parental influence/ family influence• User of OT services – positive experience• Internationally recognised qualification• Job opportunities• Client centred approach• Problem solving nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helping profession• Creativity• Broad and varied• An applied profession – practical• Wanted to be physios• Flexibility• Influenced by a speaker at school etc• Through careers advice• Dissatisfied with current occupation and looking at alternative
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The next question posed by the facilitators was **Where will your career take you?**
Again, there was a variety of responses such as:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consultant OTs and private practice – <i>AUTONOMY</i>• Working with people who do not necessarily have a disability• Politically savvy and influential• Don't know – where <u>can</u> I go?• Maximising other OTs to maximise their careers• Working in emerging economies, other cultures, travel• We want to work in other settings and	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A career to retirement• Researcher, teacher, lecturer• Managing teams• Own their own companies – aged care, mental health• Expanding the creativity aspect• Not having an OT label• Entrepreneurial OTs• Work life balance• OT as Minister for Health• Influencing the legal/judicial system –
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retain our specialized interests – eg design, home design, technology, paediatrics, work rehabilitation	educating student OTs • In every organization there will be an OT
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David spoke about different **Career pathways**, which he referred to as ‘one’s life work’. He described 4 possible career pathways:

- * Linear Career * Expert Career * Spiral Career * Transitional Career
- [Ref: Borosseau et al]

Participants were then asked **What kind of career pathway have you had and what kind of career pathway could you have?**

The responses to this question were:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a broad profession with a broad knowledge base – we change our “paths” often. <i>CHANGE</i> • Hourglass career model; speedbump model • Disruption- illness, migration, • Careers being flexible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linear careers, transitional careers, expert career paths –we don’t like to be boxed • Start linear and then become transitional – can’t progress anymore which prompts a change • Kawa model (river) - Michael Iwama
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To conclude the forum, participants were asked to consider the **Journey ahead without Maps**, and think about an answer to the question **How can your profession help you on and how can you remain linked?**

The following recommendations were made:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profession needs to articulate in a marketing (internal or external) framework what are our skills and strengths • The profession could help us to recognise the value of OT ourselves • To recognise and reward diversity of practice • Refresher courses for people who are wanting to reengage with the workforce • Political lobbying • Marketing to those “on the edge” – our prof body needs to be encompassing • CPD programs for people who want to return to clinical work • Become a mentor – help us recognise our strengths 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our publications don’t cater to those on the edge – and could reflect a more diverse practice • A means of disseminating what is going on out there • Mentoring – sometimes multiple mentoring • Building local networks • Accept people with different backgrounds – this brings diversity to the profession • Being assertive – not just fill in the gaps – help us to be assertive • Demonstrate leadership • Reduced membership during career breaks
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