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**Helping and sharing our knowledge to inform, educate and support our colleagues: the Occupational Therapy Exam Preparation Program (OTepp)**

Sue Baptiste, Elizabeth Steggles, Shami Dhillon, Leah Dix, Pat McMahon, Usha Rangachari  
*McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada*

During the past decade, there has been a marked increase in awareness of the challenges affecting internationally educated professionals seeking registration in their profession in Canada. The need to identify and eliminate barriers to access to regulated professions for qualified internationally educated candidates has been identified as an issue of fairness and social justice. It has also been seen as an economic imperative as Canada's current and forecasted skills shortages point to an urgent need to make maximum use of the skills of professionals immigrating to Canada. Many bridging programs and educational courses have been developed for various professions, but there remained a need for a discipline-specific program to be created for internationally educated occupational therapists. Early in 2008, funding was obtained to make this idea a reality.

Key project elements included: curriculum development, delivery of curriculum to 2 participant cohorts, advocacy for acceptance as a McMaster continuing education certificate course, advocacy for identifying/creating funding options for participants and evaluation of the program through exploring the learning experiences of the participants.

The five courses covered material and experiences about: the foundations of professional practice; understanding practice through application of theory; understanding the practice context; understanding evidence and using it in practice; and, putting it all together consisting of a short observational placement in a practice setting. The two optional courses involve material related to developing supportive relationships and networks, and completing a six to eight week placement experience. Program evaluation involved participant and placement preceptor interviews, investigator field notes and participant evaluations of individual courses.

Initial impressions are that involvement in this program does provide participants with opportunities to become familiar with concepts, models and approaches to Canadian occupational therapy practice. A full evaluation is still underway and results are expected prior to May 2010.

The creation of the OTepp curriculum has proven to be a rich opportunity to work closely with IEOT colleagues and gain a detailed understanding of the trials and barriers faced in relocating to Canada. The investigative team has developed a much clearer and deeper understanding of the differences in practice cultures.