

0188

## **Professional Advocacy: If Not You Then Who?**

Giovanna Boniface

*Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada*

**Introduction/Rationale:** Healthcare transformation may place occupational therapy positions in jeopardy if decision makers do not appreciate the value of occupational therapy to the health and well-being of individuals. As such, it is imperative that occupational therapists communicate their role and impact more effectively in everyday practice.

**Objectives:** Participants will be able to:

- 1) Describe the critically important role of the clinician in professional advocacy
- 2) Describe one framework of professional advocacy
- 3) Describe at least 1 strategy for professional advocacy action to implement in everyday practice

**Description:** This presentation will begin with a review of professional advocacy in the Canadian context, at the national and provincial level of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. One framework of professional advocacy will be presented, anchored in an example to expand access to occupational therapy services. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of strategies and tools that clinicians can utilize in everyday practice to engage in professional advocacy.

**Discussion:** The climate of healthcare transformation compels the occupational therapy profession to step up advocacy efforts to ensure that it is sustained. The timing is ripe for occupational therapists to seize the opportunity to engage professional advocacy actions in their everyday practice.

**Contribution to Practice/Evidence Base of Occupational Therapy:** Professional advocacy is required to ensure the sustainability of the profession and to further expand its role in health care. With 85% of the Canadian occupational therapy workforce identified as clinicians, the power of individual advocacy cannot be underestimated and can be leveraged.