This issue of the American Journal of Occupational Therapy reflects an increase in the quantity and quality of scholarly projects submitted for publication in this special issue. The positive response to the call for papers is evidence of the focused interest that faculty, both academic and clinical, and practitioners have brought to their work of educating and preparing the next generation of occupational therapists. This article discusses educational issues from academic, student, and fieldwork points of view, further validating the pervasive commitment that is being made to further understanding of how occupational therapists are educated. The articles cover topics including the critical issues of curriculum, value and timing of fieldwork and simulation experiences, and documentation of strategies to measure the effects of comparative educational experiences.

In the 2014 inaugural publication of the education supplement of the American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT), we wrote, “These articles promise to stimulate dialogue among academic and clinical educators and serve as a benchmark for an active and productive focus on education practices, outcomes, and the development of innovative models for teaching and learning” (Burke & Harvison, 2014, p. S2). Much to the credit of educators (academic and clinical), clinicians, and administrators in occupational therapy programs across the country and beyond, that publication (and Education Summit 2013) has indeed stimulated dialogue. As a result, we have witnessed an uptick in the quantity and quality of scholarly projects submitted for publication in this second education supplement and in response to the Call for Papers for the 2015 Education Summit. These positive responses are evidence of the focused interest that faculty, both academic and clinical, and practitioners have brought to their work of educating and preparing the next generation of occupational therapists. In turn, we have received strong support from the American Occupational Therapy Association in response to our call for increased venues in which to present and publish educational articles. Working collaboratively, we have moved education scholarship and research into a new era of discourse within the field replete with evidence-based projects that will inform curricula and fieldwork as they evolve.

In this issue of AJOT are articles that address pedagogy and instructional design topics including the effects of specific curricular changes (Benevides, Vause-Earland, & Walsh, 2015; Schwartz & Smith, 2015), the use of simulation and standardized patients (Baird, Raina, Rogers, O’Donnell, & Holm, 2015; Baird, Raina, Rogers, O’Donnell, Terhorst, & Holm, 2015; Cahill, 2015) and tests (Avi-Itzhak, 2015), and the use of online synchronous learning (Aldrich & Johansson, 2015) as well as the production of data documenting educational outcomes that are inclusive of both student learner and educator (classroom, standardized patient, fieldwork) perspectives (Chapleau & Harrison, 2015; Evenson, Roberts, Kaldenberg, Barnes, & Ozelie, 2015; Grenier, 2015). That educational issues are addressed from academic, student, and fieldwork points of view further validates the pervasive commitment that is being made to further understanding of how occupational therapists are educated.
in this issue is consideration of the critical issues of curricular offerings, the value and timing of fieldwork and simulation experiences, and the documentation of strategies used to measure the effect of comparative educational experiences (including when and how they are provided).

The authors of the articles in this issue have included a range of perspectives on the topic of learning. They set about to understand the experience by surveying, interviewing, and collecting data to understand and support education strategies and their perceived value to students. Similarly, they aimed to gain information for students at the master’s and doctoral levels, educators in the classroom and fieldwork environments, collaborators in research, and therapists involved in standardized patient encounters.

Rounding out this supplement is an article providing a well-thought-out consideration of the move to doctoral-level entry into the profession (Brown, Crabtree, Mu, & Wells, 2015) and a The Issue Is piece focusing on the importance of placing occupation as the centerpiece of occupational therapy education (Hooper et al., 2015). In the latter article, the authors provide both perspective and tangible ideas and strategies for academic and fieldwork educators.

It is exciting to see the innovations, energy, and most of all novel ideas that occupational therapy educators bring to the teaching enterprise. Through opportunities to present these ideas, demonstrate their effectiveness, and discuss their viability, we expect that we will continue to see substantial changes in how educational practices evolve. As we look to the future, we realize that we are evolving in our understanding of how to effectively and efficiently prepare occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants to meet societal needs. This progress will be the foundation for fundamental changes in our construction of new methods for teaching and learning in occupational therapy—truly the sign that we are all part of an educational revolution. ▲

References


