

OT PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION OTAC BENEFITS

The Value of Membership

Why Should I Join My State OT Association? A Therapist's Dilemma by Babak Amali, OTR

As a member of OTAC, I have been paying my dues for several years. Every year I received a membership renewal, wrote a check and mailed it back. In return, I got a new card with my name and ID number. I did not really know what to do with the card, so I filed it with the rest of my stuff in the "Stuff File." Even though I had no idea where the money was going and how it was being spent, I never asked myself why I was paying the annual dues. I guess, at the time, it just felt like something I should be doing.

Last year as the economy took a dive, I, like many other people, started looking at the family expenses. "Where can I cut back?," I asked myself. I looked further into our receipts, and into the "Stuff File." "Eureka," I could save \$190 a year by cancelling my OTAC membership. "Unreasonably priced for something that I don't even use," I thought disappointedly. "I must have surely paid my dues to the profession by now." I made a note on my to-do list to not renew.

Luckily, I forgot to check my to-do list. I say luckily because if I knew then what I know now, I would have never even thought about cancelling my membership. \$190 per year... is that it? Many of us pay five times more a year just to buy a daily \$3 cup of coffee! Then I thought, "I bet the argument will be 'I enjoy my cup of coffee every morning.' What do I get from my OTAC membership?"

Hmmmm... "What do I get?"

I did some research. First I Googled "professional association" and found a few definitions: "A Professional Association is an organization formed to unite and inform people who work in the same occupation." ...and... "Professional Associations exist for the benefit of the individuals within that organization, to look after their interests, and to provide them with information and resources to help them in their career."

Well, that sounds good but is that worth what I pay? What else is there for *me*? I researched more:

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OTAC Vision & Mission

VISION STATEMENT:

We envision that occupational therapy is a powerful, widely recognized, science-driven, and evidence-based profession with a globally connected and diverse workforce meeting society's occupational needs.

MISSION STATEMENT:

OTAC serves, supports and promotes the profession of occupational therapy and its practitioners.



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"Professional Associations offer networking opportunities, continuing education and information. They work to advance the profession through maintaining/developing standards, encouraging/providing professional development and legislative advocacy. They watch for trends, changes, advances in their industry, and help members to stay up-to-date through newsletters, conferences, seminars..."

I stopped and thought about it.

- I have been using OTAC's newsletters and Web site to find out what is going on in my profession with all the federal cutbacks.
- I have been going to OTAC conferences and seminars to network with others and further educate myself for a very reasonable cost. In fact, I received my continuing education hours for CBOT Physical Agent Modalities Advanced Practice Approval through courses provided by OTAC.
- OTAC has also notified me every time a piece of legislation may potentially jeopardize my profession. This year, I have been going to OTAC's Board of Directors meetings, and I am not even a board member. I contacted them and asked if I could attend as a guest. They replied, "Please do." After going to the first meeting, I gained so much appreciation for what they do. I realized what I would have missed if I wasn't part of this association. It is amazing how much OTAC does to keep my profession moving forward.

I was so proud! My annual OTAC dues were spent in the best possible way. I found out that OTAC even has a plan allowing new or renewing members to pay in installments with the E-Z Pay Plan. Many employers offer funds for continuing education or licensure fees. Why not take it one step further and see if this money can help with OTAC dues?

I checked my to-do list the other day. It read in bold: Get involved in your professional association!

You can renew -- or join -- through OTAC's Web site, www.otaonline.org. It's easy, really.

Questions about your dues renewal, the E-Z Pay Plan or membership? Contact Debbie Wassermann toll free at 888/686-3225 or at Debbie@otaonline.org

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