ON WHAT MAKES OT EXCITING..

“OT is a profession in which one can shift gears and constantly reinvent oneself. OT is a versatile profession and OTs can work in various practice areas with different populations and in different contexts and never get bored. There is always something new to learn and something to keep you motivated and excited about the profession.”

- Dr. Holly Wasserman, OTR, EdD

MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Dr. Wasserman started her career as an occupational therapist (OT) at NYU-Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation Medicine, where she worked for ten years as therapist and manager, specializing in the rehabilitation of adults with orthopedic and neurological conditions. Approximately four years ago, Dr. Wasserman became interested in telehealth, which influenced the topic of her doctoral dissertation entitled: Occupational Therapy Faculty Perspectives On The Use Of Telehealth As A Delivery Method For Healthcare Services, which she competed in August, 2017. Dr. Wasserman is also a Certified Aging in Place Specialist, who continues to pursue her clinical passions and desire to work in the community addressing the home adaptations/modifications of individuals who wish to live in their homes as independently as possible. It is evident that during her career as an OT, she has been able to explore different areas that interested her, something she very much appreciates about the profession.

Apart from her passion and dedication for working with patients, Dr. Wasserman has made it a priority to share her excitement and motivation about the OT profession with students. She has been an influential staff member at Long Island University (LIU) OT Program for the past fifteen years. She began her journey at LIU as an academic fieldwork coordinator for eight years and later her role transitioned to the evening and weekend program coordinator. During this time, she was involved in connecting students to fieldwork locations that would best suit their academic knowledge and needs. Two years ago, her role transitioned once again as she became the Director of the OT Program at LIU.

Part of Dr. Wasserman’s role as a director is working on the expansion of curriculum development in order to comply with the 2027 ACOTE mandate requiring all OT programs to reach a doctorate level. As a result, Dr. Wasserman is working with faculty members to create a new curriculum for the OTD program which will allow students to gain a higher level of expertise, and improve their leadership and clinical skills. Furthermore, Dr. Wasserman hopes to expand the curriculum on telehealth to teach students how to use this treatment service in different practice areas.

Ultimately, Dr. Wasserman is excited for her new role and to extend a heartfelt farewell to the Graduate Class of 2018. She wishes the students well and advises them to work in non-traditional settings and create niches for themselves, always keeping in mind to look outside of the box when looking for employment.

We are excited to present the first LIU Brooklyn OT Newsletter and hope to use it as a medium for both staff, students, and alumni to stay connected and up to date on the successes of the program and profession.

- Alexandra Gadayeva & Adriana (Alex) Cordova OTS
Why did you choose occupational therapy?

Honestly, I was in the right place at the right time. I received occupational therapy services after sustaining a boxer fracture, fracturing my fifth metacarpal. Throughout receiving therapy, I realized how much I appreciated the therapeutic process. Through therapy, I was able return to my prior level of functioning. I was able to see myself enjoying this profession and appreciating the broadness and variety of occupational therapy. In addition, occupational therapy is a field that incorporates my interests of client interaction and the science field.

Where have you worked before?

I have worked in various settings throughout my career. I have experience working in home care, nursing home facilities, as well as inpatient and outpatient settings. However, I primarily worked for the VA hospital in Brooklyn. While working in the VA I treated active and retired duty members who had injured themselves. I was there for eight years. I feel as though I have a personal connection working there since my Mom retired from the army. Working there was my way of giving back to all the individuals who have protected our country.

What do you wish to accomplish in your new position as fieldwork coordinator?

As the new Level 1 Fieldwork Coordinator, there are many things I wish to accomplish in this position. I am currently working on having a better understanding of the program as well as creating relationships with each of the fieldwork sites. When placing students for their Level I fieldwork rotations, I try to speak with students and get an understanding of their goals, concerns, and interests to ensure a suitable match and successful experience.

Anything else you want to tell us or share with our readers?

I am excited to hear about the creation of the newsletter! A newsletter is a fantastic tool that can be used in many ways to provide our program with a sense of cohesion and unity. In addition, it can be used to project our program to future applicants as well as keep our graduates and alumni involved in the events and accomplishments of LIU’s Occupational Therapy program.

Why did you choose occupational therapy?

As occupational therapists, client centered practice must be on the forefront of our minds, especially when treating individuals that present with disability. Regarding aging in place, I am interested in looking at the physical context such as accessibility in home environment and transportation and adapting these environments to promote successful aging for older adults. Occupational therapists play a role in creating environments that will promote safety, social engagement, and activity participation for the geriatric population.

- Prof. Nuwere, OTR/L, ATP

What lead you to becoming a professor?

While working in the VA, I had the opportunity to supervise OT students. I enjoyed working with them, and figured I can do this in a classroom setting as well. In 2013, I was offered a position in LIU as an adjunct professor. I started off teaching one class, and as time went on I was teaching four classes. Currently, I am the fieldwork coordinator here at LIU and I also teach two classes: OT 303 and OT 432.

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By Aviva Hess and Sarah Shalitsky OTS
Research at Occupational Therapy

What led you to Long Island University?

I was looking for a university that can accommodate my interest of teaching as well as the opportunity to expand on my research. LIU has facilitated my ability to continue my research endeavors of mother and child joint play from infancy to middle childhood.

What kind of research have you done?

My research focus on co-occupation in the form of parent child joint play from infancy to mid-childhood. More specifically focusing on how mother supports child’s playfulness as well as child’s playfulness. The parental support for child’s playfulness is assessed with an observation scale I co-developed, looking at the quality and frequency of support provided during joint play.

What life experiences led you to work with mother and child play?

At first, I was intrigued to work with children and their mothers using dyadic intervention, which combines skillset of mental health and pediatrics. In the past, it was not as accessible or available in the pediatric population. Various life experience led me to my chosen field of interest. I had the opportunity to work in a mental health center in Israel catering to children with challenging behaviors. My supervisor was an OT with strong background in pediatric mental health and a clinical psychologist. I also used to collaborate with other therapists and psychologists throughout the period I spent at the mental health center in its pediatric division. I also had an opportunity to work at a shelter for women who were exposed to domestic violence. A psychologist and myself co-lead a mother-child playgroup where we focused on joint play with mothers and children ages of 1 to 4. After completing my masters, I did a lot of self-learning on Attachment Theory, play therapy, and trauma mainly related to exposure to domestic violence.

realize that I greatly enjoy observing and intervening in the area of joint play and parenting.

What are the methods of intervention?

I did a research study of the effectiveness of intervention model developed for mothers and children who were exposed to domestic violence in Israel. It was a crisis-based intervention and the individuals have lived in a shelter for a short period of time. The age target was on young children ages 1-5. In the effectiveness study, the protocol included 30 min sessions on an 8-week span with pre and post measurement. The theory and research driven intervention model utilized play-based intervention focusing on child’s play skills, playfulness, and mother-child interaction.

Are you currently doing any research?

Yes. I am currently working on community-based research with LIU capstones students with children from the ages of 1-5-year olds. Perhaps next upcoming year we’ll increase it to seven to eleven-year-olds, and we might focus on father-child play too.

Interview with Dr Waldman-Levi, OTR/L, PhD

FOCUS OF RESEARCH

On co-occupation in the form of parent child joint play from infancy to mid-childhood.

More specifically focusing on how mother supports child’s playfulness as well as child’s playfulness.

EARLY EXPERIENCES

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- Dr Amiya Waldman-Levi OTR/L, PhD

Tsippora Youseflaleh, Myra Bassoul & Fay Schiffenbauer OTS
There have been many exciting events over the course of the 2018 Spring Semester including guest speakers Stella Spanakos from Spectrum Design, Jeff Tomlinson from NYSOTA and representatives from the Board of Education discussing potential job opportunities and student scholarships.

The annual community service event spearheaded by SOTA was a toiletry drive to benefit clients at Project Renewal’s Geffner House. Thank you all for your donations! Any feedback about recent SOTA events or ideas for future ones would be most appreciated! Looking forward to a great summer semester!

HIGHLIGHTS OF SPRING 2018

Newly Elected SOTA Board Members

Congratulations to the newly elected Board Members!!!

Aviva Koff, President
Becky Belinky, Vice President
Hindi Aahronson, Treasurer
Alyssa Warych, Secretary
Moyanne Tessler, Social Media Chair
Imani McKay; Diversity Rep
Facebook: LIU Student Occupational Therapy Association
IG: liu_s.o.t.a
Long Island University’s Occupational Therapy program embarked on their 4th annual service learning trip to Belize City this past March. Five second-year occupational therapy students joined Professors Dale Coffin and Mechelle Collins on this journey to provide services to children with varying disabilities residing in Belize. Each year, LIU teams up with The Inspiration Center in Belize City and spends one week evaluating, treating, and offering care plans to these children who are diagnosed with disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome, Sensory Processing Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, and others. There are no occupational therapists in the country of Belize, therefore this annual trip greatly impacts the development of these children.

As students on the trip, we anticipated what information would be most applicable to the children we’d be seeing. Developmental milestones, primitive reflexes, grasp patterns, and sensory integration were among the topics reviewed before heading to Belize. While this information was absolutely relevant to our treatment, we quickly learned that our knowledge from the classroom must be accompanied by practical skills. For example, throughout the trip we were constantly challenged to think on our feet. Sometimes, in only a few minutes time, we had to choose activities that would allow us to evaluate the child’s function while considering the child’s age and diagnosis. This seemed intimidating at first because prior to this trip we had little clinical experience with this population, but to our surprise, we were able to pick up on it quickly.

This trip enabled us to gain new skills such as making splints. We treated a 5-year-old with spastic cerebral palsy who needed a resting hand splint to help correct and prevent future deformities in the left hand. We used splinting material sent from LIU a few years back, a kettle to heat the water, and a baking dish to place the water in and heat the splinting material. We had to make do with what we had which was challenging but also forced us to be creative. To our surprise, the most challenging part was not remembering how to make the template for the splint but it was trying to relax the child’s hand hand well enough to mold the material on her while trying to keep her still and attempting to distracting her from the process so she wouldn’t put up a fight. There was so much more that went into making the splint that goes beyond what we learned in class.

Some of the children in Belize have disorders that are uncommon in the US. One child in particular that comes to mind is a young boy with a diagnosis of Hunter’s Syndrome. Prior to meeting this child, many of us had never heard of this disease. We did as much research as we could that morning before heading out into the city and visiting the boy at his home. His chart had indicated that this disorder presented in moderate deficits and below age-level functioning, which indicated both physical and cognitive dysfunction. Although this case seemed like it’d be tough, we were eager to meet this boy and have the opportunity to evaluate and treat him. Once we arrived at his home, it was evident that his living environment was not facilitating his development. Still, he was eager to meet us and to participate in the activities we had prepared for him. He interacted with us without hesitation and was so pleasant throughout the entire session. We were able to work on fine motor control and upper extremity strengthening, as well as some PT-related skills that were beneficial to him even within that one session.

It is highly recommended that any LIU students who have the opportunity to go to Belize, take it. As second-year students, we have limited hands-on, clinical experience. Treating in Belize allowed us to gain that experience and jump start our clinical skill development. It taught us how to improve on our observation skills, our interviewing skills, and our clinical reasoning. The education we learned in Belize is the practical knowledge you don’t get until you are out in the field. To be able to have this much hands-on experience as a second-year student who has only completed one level I fieldwork placement was phenomenal to our growth as future occupational therapists. Most importantly, this experience was incredibly rewarding. We were given the opportunity to make a difference in children’s lives and likewise, they made a difference in ours.
On Sunday, April 29, 2018, the LIU OT Program recognized 49 students from the Class of 2018 with a graduation ceremony at the Kumble Theater at LIU Brooklyn. Several students were recognized for their achievements and accomplishments. We were also honored to have Stella Spanakos, as our keynote speaker. Stella is the Co-Founder of the Nicholas Center and Spectrum Designs Foundations, which are both dedicated to “Providing gainful employment and meaningful work opportunities to individuals with autism within a social enterprise; in an effort to assist them in leading fuller, independent and productive lives”. Stella’s words were powerful and gave us all the inspiration to preserve through hardships!

Best of luck to the LIU OT Class of 2018!

Day Program

Weekend/Evening Program
I was given the opportunity to present at the WFOT congress held in Cape Town, South Africa from May 21 – 25, 2018. The congress theme was Connected in Diversity: Positioned for Impact.

Doris Obler, PhD, MSW, OTR
Associate Professor, LIU Brooklyn

The Cape Town Convention Center was the venue for networking with Occupational Therapists from all over the world. Everyone had the opportunity to share ideas and reinforce OT goals. Themes that evolved were “advocate and connect” and “be courageous, have a voice & be heard” (wfot, 2018).

Immersing in the African culture was not difficult as everyone was warm and welcoming. The congress dinner was a rare treat which represented the African culture through food and entertainment.

The next WFOT will be in Paris, France, 2022. I encourage everyone to take advantage of representing your culture, your ideas and your visions for the future of OT.

Dale Coffin MS OTR/L: The extent the Fieldwork educator has on Level II Fieldwork Performance
Mechelle Collins MS OTR/L: How Professional Behaviors Affect Fieldwork Scores in Level I Fieldwork (Adetumi Adeniyi, Dayshaun Forman, Megan Marti, Diann Pierre, Nitchelle Predvil)
Michelle Kontarovich OTR/L: Who Do I Need OT? Promoting Self-Determination
Rachel Mendelsohn OTR/L: Integrating Evidence-Based Progressive Muscle Relaxation with the Acute Ortho Patient
Doris Obler OTR/L, PhD: Student Satisfaction in Atypical Fieldwork Settings (Tatiana Kutergina, Stephanie Lapice, Melisa Louissant, Elza Sedrak)
Anne Scott OTR/L, PhD: Reel to Reel: Illness Narratives in Disability
Amiya Waldman-Levi OTR/L, PhD: Resilience Factors (SRP) and Use of Technology Among Individuals with DD
Holly Wasserman OTR/L EdD: Telehealth Occupational Therapy Faculty members Knowledge and Perceptions

LIU at the 2018 AOTA Conference
The 101st Annual AOTA Conference was held in Salt Lake City, Utah this past April. This year’s conference theme focused on creating our future! Current OT faculty, students, and alumni attended the conference where they presented research, formulated networking opportunities, and enjoyed the Alumni & Friends Reception. The department had faculty and alumni presentations the Scientific Research Panel. Continual reaching out beyond our walls with contributions to research and scholarship from faculty, students and alumni occur year after year.

Robin Akselrud OTR/L, OTD: Identifying Stressors, Coping Strategies & Using Mental Health Support Services in OT Graduate Students

STUDENTS IN ACTION: ATOF Scholarship Winners
2 years in a row LIU has had winners for the ATOF Scholarship for future scientists.

Fatima Uddin (2017) and Loretta O’Brien (2018) presented exceptional applications and attended the summer institutes with a commitment to pursue a research-focused career.


Prof. Saraceno received a Service Award for his 15 years of dedication to the LIU OT Program. He will receive one LIU’s famous rocking chairs as his present.

**LIU OT student Inductees at the 10th Annual Pi Theta Epsilon: Gamma Eta Induction Ceremony**

Twenty-one LIU OT Students were recently inducted at the Pi Theta Epsilon: Gamma Eta Annual Induction Ceremony. All students must be in the top 20% of their class.

*Pi Theta Epsilon: Gamma Eta Induction Ceremony*