



## WEBINAR SESSION 1

# Introduction to the Global Strategy for the Occupational Therapy Workforce – Questions and Answers

**Question 1:** Australia: The private practice market for OT has grown exponentially in the past decade due to the establishment of our 'National Disability Insurance Scheme'. Workforce substitution is a real threat to our profession eg 'recovery coaches' at half the price to the scheme. Workforce shortages leave voids for other clinicians to fill the space in the private market. Is extensive use of allied health assistants a good strategy for OTs?

The employment of assistants for role substitution is not encouraged. Value may be gained, however, for use of assistants to augment the occupational therapy workforce (see Strategic Direction 4 of the Global Strategy for the Occupational Therapy Workforce). Occupational therapy assistants can help to extend the workforce by addressing tasks in the provision of occupational therapy that do not require the skills, knowledge and abilities of occupational therapists. This can allow occupational therapists to better use their competencies to work at the top of their practice scope, utilising the full extent of their skills and training.

**Question 2:** What are the plans for WFOT to address the integration of OT into social prescribing? Social prescribing is aligned with all of these 2035 vision goals yet OT is minimally involved in social prescribing across the globe.

WFOT advocates for occupational therapists in primary health care roles such as social prescribing. Please see our position statement on Occupational Therapy and Primary Care at <https://wfot.org/resources/occupational-therapy-and-primary-care>.

**Question 3:** In developing countries like India, coming out of overshadowed by other profession is very difficult. Other Professions are copying our approaches, practicing OT skills under their own name as we are few in numbers, awareness in society is low, laws to prohibit other professionals to use our skills and practice are not available. Legal system should be strong.

As occupational therapists often do not have a protected scope of practice that prohibits other professions from providing services similar to occupational therapy, advocacy is required to create

awareness of the value of the occupation-based approach which is unique to our profession. Strategic direction 7 of the Global Strategy for the Occupational Therapy Workforce discusses approaches to building workforce leadership and advocacy for the profession.

**Question 4:** Are there any opportunities for students to support the global workforce strategy in research and/or doctoral capstone experiences?

A scoping review of occupational therapy human resources research was undertaken as part of development of the Global Strategy for the Occupational Therapy Workforce. The scoping review identified a variety of gaps in the research literature. WFOT encourages students and faculty to review the Global Strategy to identify areas of potential research.

**Question 5:** I want to applaud the team for putting this document together. It is certainly going to benefit all OT Practitioners across the world. In Africa, only 16 countries out of the 56 countries have occupational therapy services. It is quite interesting how a profession over a 100 years old has low representation across the world. Are there plans of establishing our profession in countries where they are not available?

WFOT works actively with countries wishing to develop occupational therapy services to provide guidance and support. Information regarding the work of the Federation is available on the WFOT website. For example, please see <https://wfot.org/education/development-of-a-new-occupational-therapy-entry-level-education-programme> and <https://wfot.org/our-work/professional-support/occupational-therapy-service-development>.

**Question 6:** Chile: COMMENT: Congratulations on this great work, it is amazing. It is a project that will benefit occupational therapy in the medium and long term. I'm sure that in 10 or 20 years, we will appreciate the important work you are doing now.

**QUESTIONS:** In addition to supporting the WFOT surveys, is there any other way we can contribute?

The Global Strategy for the Occupational Therapy Workforce outlines a wide variety of actions that can be undertaken to address occupational therapy workforce issues. It is suggested that a needs assessment be undertaken at the local level to identify priorities for action.

**What specific data do you need us to keep updated, and how often should we update it?**

WFOT conducts a Human Resources Project every two years to collect information from national occupational therapy organisations regarding the occupational therapy workforce. More information about the type of data collected can be gained by reviewing past reports of the Human Resources Project (please see <https://wfot.org/resources/occupational-therapy-human-resources-project-2022-numerical>).

**Just as a methodological question, how was the advisory team formed? Was it a group of therapists from various contexts and countries, different professions, or experts in workforce issues?**

The Advisory Team was selected based on expertise and published research regarding health human resource issues. The Team was interdisciplinary and international in scope.

**Question 7: Any suggestions on inclusion of first nations people and consideration in workforce goals?**

Strategic Direction 5 of the Global Strategy for the Occupational Therapy Workforce addresses the issue of workforce diversity, with the aim of better ensuring the workforce reflects the populations served and race, gender, or other demographic-based barriers to career opportunities, development or compensation are eliminated.

**Question 8: Working in a special school, I've noticed how many children need OT services in the school setting, not just in rehabilitation. However, it's discouraging for international OTs to join the global workforce due to numerous requirements. As someone from Asia who uses English as a second language, I've observed that international OTs from non-English speaking countries often have to take costly English proficiency exams. Additionally, the Educational Background Equivalency process can take up to a year and is very expensive. My question is: How can international OTs contribute to the global OT workforce despite these challenges?**

A suggested action for Strategic Direction 5 includes improving the inter-operability of licensing requirements across jurisdictions, toward improved comparisons, mobility, or remote service delivery across jurisdictions.

**Question 9: Thank you so much for this critically important work and for sharing so transparently. With almost 145K OTPs (2023), it seems that the NBCOT in the United States has a treasure trove of workforce data but has been far less transparent and generous in sharing its data not only with individual US education programs but with the global effort to promote the profession. How can WFOT leverage its leadership to set higher expectations for NBCOTs transparent contribution to this effort?**

WFOT is working on a number of initiatives to improve availability of data regarding the occupational therapy workforce in collaboration with our member organisations and partners, including the World Health Organisation. For example, with our partners, WFOT is advocating for inclusion of occupational therapy in the National Health Workforce Accounts, an international repository for health human resources data. Through such involvement, participation of governments and other regulatory organisations may be encouraged to ensure occupational therapy is appropriately represented in international comparative data.

**Question 10: Good morning. Thank you for sharing this information. We would appreciate the slides to share with our teams.**

A recording of the webinar will be made available at <https://wfot.org/our-work/workforce-development>.

**Question 11: how to become a speaker in forthcoming sessions in 2025**

Thank you for your interest. Please contact us at [admin@wfot.org](mailto:admin@wfot.org).