OT Profession: Delineating Licensure vs. Credentialing for what it is worth

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Abstract

Compliance with state licensure and professional credentialing is required by occupational therapy (OT) practitioners. The profession has been around for over 100 years and individuals are confused on the services provided, let alone appropriate titles for practitioners. OT practitioners, students, employers, and clinical supervisors have been noted to misuse titles associated with licensure and credentialing. The purpose of this study is to ensure the profession sustains its clear distinction by ensuring individuals understand appropriate usage of titles for OT practitioners while thriving as a profession.

Objectives

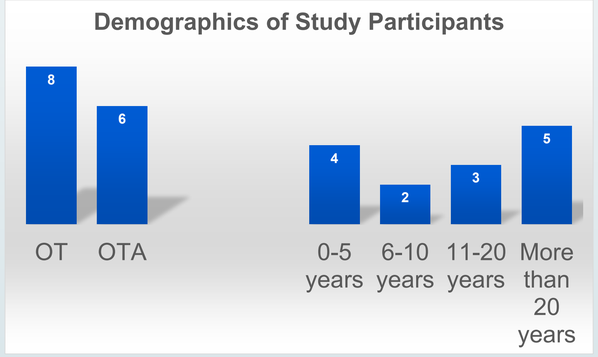
1. Assess the knowledge of OT practitioners, students, and employers regarding licensure and credentialing in Texas.
2. Analyze the common misconceptions regarding licensure and credentialing amongst practitioners and stakeholders.
3. Identify terms and/or titles that are misunderstood that may benefit from further education for practitioners and stakeholders.

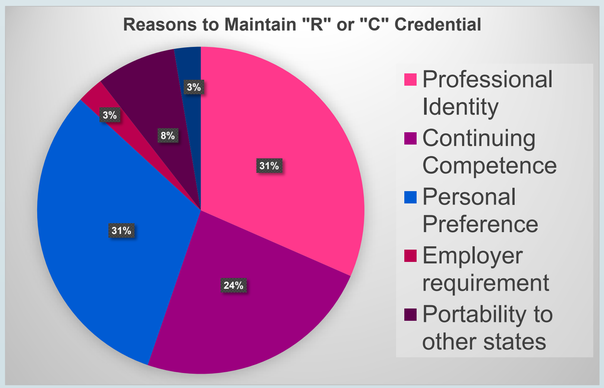
Introduction

Understanding the policies and procedures associated with licensure specifically with this use of nomenclature and use of credentials earned is important in OT practice. The proper use of the credential's “R” and “C” as well as adherence to Texas OT Rules set forth by The Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners is relevant today as misuse of titles and credentials appears in job ads and other publication. Overall, following licensure rules regarding use of titles should be a part of conversation in Texas as OT practitioners.

Methodology

A cross-sectional survey design was utilized to collect quantitative data from OT practitioners and stakeholders. Through professional networks and academic contacts, a link to a survey instrument developed through Microsoft forms, encompassing Likert-scale items was accessible for voluntary participants. Quantitative data including demographic information, knowledge of licensure and credentialing rules, and overall understanding of OT professional titles was obtained from the survey. Quantitative data was analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics as well as comparative analysis of demographic data to identify findings.

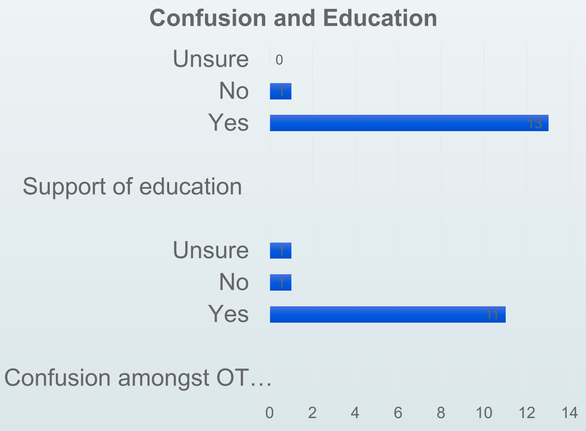


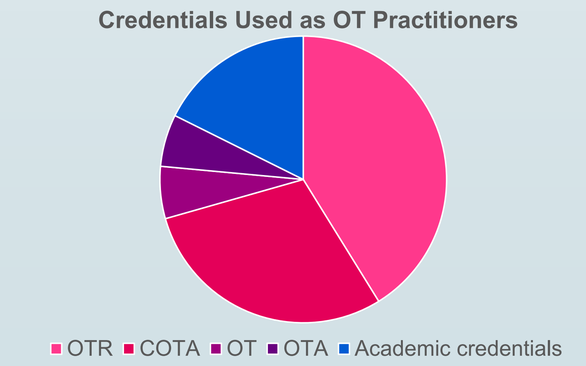


Results

The study yielded a low response rate of N=14. The researcher ascertains several assumptions for the low response rate which includes:

- Practitioners unsure of the difference in licensure credentials and general credentials that can be earned as an OT practitioner.
- Hesitation with completing surveys regarding licensure and credentialing.
- Lack of participation in general of OT practitioners to respond to surveys.





Conclusion

Although there was a low response rate to the survey the study provided some insight into how others understand and perceive licensure and credentialing as an OT professional.

- More OTs than OTA’s responded to the survey as well as those with more than 20 years in practice.
- Most of survey participants believe there is confusion amongst OT practitioners in understanding the various aspects of licensure and credentialing.
- Professional identity and personal preference were the top reasons for retaining the professional credential of “R” or “C” in conjunction with a license to practice.

Overall, participants appeared to understand the policies but felt more education should be added as a OT practitioner.

Implications

From the data collected, OT Practitioners believe further education is needed secondary to confusion of delineating the “C” and “R” amongst other credentials that can be utilized in the profession. Various means of education can occur to not only help OT practitioners but the general public.

- Use of social media to post facts about licensure and credential use.
- OT and OTA programs can continue to enforce education about licensure and credentials.
- OT practitioners can continue to advocate to others and employers use of correct terminology related to licensure and credentials.

References

The Texas Board of Occupational Therapy Examiners (2026, May). *TBOTE News* [Newsletter]. https://ptot.texas.gov/ot-newsletters/

National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy. (n.d.). *Homepage*. NBCOT