



Advisory Statement

Use of Title

In British Columbia, only registrants of the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia can legally use the title occupational therapist or OT.

Purpose

This Advisory Statement informs registrants regarding appropriate use of title.

Introduction

A title can quickly impart information to the general public, clients or other health professionals. It may confirm education and professional designation, provide information about a job role, convey professional affiliations, or represent additional qualifications.

The ability to use title is a privilege granted to registrants of a regulatory College who have demonstrated they possess the required education qualifications, knowledge, skills and attributes to practice their profession.

You are required to be registered with COTBC to:

- use the title of occupational therapist, OT, or O.T.
- hold yourself out to be an occupational therapist, and
- work as an occupational therapist.

According to the *Health Professional Act* (HPA) and the Occupational Therapist Regulation, only registrants of the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (COTBC) are permitted to use titles such as occupational therapist or abbreviations such as OT, or equivalent terms in other languages or state they are providing occupational therapy services (HPA, Chapter 183, Section 12.1, 1996). These titles are referred to as “reserved titles”.

How to Use Your Reserved Title

Registrants should represent their professional designation clearly. Consider the use of other credentials and job title information from the perspective of your clients. Make provisions to explain what these mean and how they relate to your services.

A registrant of COTBC must use the following reserved titles:
occupational therapist or OT or O.T.

Use of University Degrees

Occupational therapists may have completed other degrees before or after their occupational therapy education. These university degrees can be used by registrants following their name as long as this additional information is not misleading regarding the services that are being provided. The reserved title can be placed before or after the university degrees.

Example: Mary Roland OT, MSc, BSc(OT) or Mary Roland MSc, BSc(OT), OT

Job Titles

Many job titles are descriptive and can provide useful information to the public about your role on the health team. You can use your reserved title and job title.

Example: John Smith, Occupational Therapist, Case Manager, Fraser Health Authority

CONTINUED ON PAGE TWO.

Professional Memberships

Although registrants may wish to promote their membership in professional associations, designations such as OT(C) can be misinterpreted. The public might consider this to mean “certified” occupational therapist rather than a member of the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists. Consider the goal of using such a designation. Perhaps it would be clearer to state on a business card: *Proud member of my professional association CAOT.*

Specialists

Use of the title “specialist” is regulated by the College through the authority to establish a register of specialists [COTBC Bylaw section 49(2)]. To do so, the College Board would need to determine the registrant requirements prior to granting use of a specialist designation. To date, the board has not established a specialist register. Therefore, registrants are advised not to use the term *specialist* or any similar designation suggesting a recognized special status in any communications such as advertising or business cards [COTBC Bylaw section 91(5)].

Title for Associated Roles

Students

It is important that the public is clear who they are working with and clients need to understand that the individual is a student and under the supervision of a registered occupational therapist. COTBC recommends that occupational therapy students use the following designation(s) on a name badge and client records as well as making it clear to the public and team members of their role as a student in the fieldwork placement.

Example:

*student occupational therapist or student OT or student O.T.
occupational therapy student or OT student or O.T. student*

Support Personnel

The same concept applies to unregulated support personnel. Occupational therapists assigning service components to support personnel should keep in mind what is represented to their clients. The support personnel should clearly indicate that they are working in the role of an assistant and are under the supervision of a registered occupational therapist.

Examples include: rehabilitation assistant, OT assistant.

Inappropriate Use of Title

The misuse of title occurs when an individual:

- is not an occupational therapist and uses a reserved title;
- is not an occupational therapist and practices in a manner which would lead someone to believe she or he was a registered OT;
- is practicing occupational therapy and has not registered with COTBC;
- is practicing occupational therapy and has cancelled their registration with COTBC; and
- is in the non-practicing category with COTBC.

If you have any concerns about someone inappropriately using title please contact the Registrar at COTBC.

Use of Title When on a Leave of Absence

Just as a reminder, if you are taking a leave of absence from work and cancel your registration with COTBC, please make sure to re-register BEFORE you return to a position as an occupational therapist and use title. Note that it is irrelevant whether or not you engage in direct client care.

References

College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia. (2001).

College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia bylaws.
Victoria, BC: Author.

College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario. (March, 2001).

College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario Position Statement: Use of Title. Toronto, ON: Author.

Health Professions Act, British Columbia, Chapter 183, Section 12.1 (1996).

Resources

Corbett, K. (Winter, 2007). Registrar’s reflections: Clarity for the public. *InStep*, 2-3. Victoria, BC: College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia.

Websites

College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia
www.cotbc.org

Health Professions Act, Prohibition and limitation – use of reserve titles
http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/00_96183_01#section12.1

Health Professions Act, Occupational Therapists Regulation
http://www.bclaws.ca/EPLibraries/bclaws_new/document/ID/freeside/25_286_2008

Advisory Statements are published by the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia to increase registrants’ awareness of important issues relevant to the practice of occupational therapy and/or critical issues that have the potential to affect, or have a direct impact on, occupational therapy practice.