



**Project on “Profession-Based Language Assessment
in Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy”**

Stakeholder Meeting – Summary Record (April 8, 2010)

Location: Westin Harbour Castle, Toronto, ON – April 8, 2010 (8:30am-4:30pm)

Hosts: The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (The Alliance), The College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO), The College of Physiotherapists of Ontario (CPO)

1. The meeting opened with the event facilitator, Gail Hall, welcoming everybody on behalf of the project’s Management Committee (The Alliance, COTO, CPO). Participants were asked to introduce themselves and the organizations they represent. Meeting attendees included: provincial regulators, employers, educators, language experts and representatives from professional associations (a complete list of participants can be found at the end of this summary - #7).

Participants shared their expectations and goals for the meeting. A number of key themes emerged:

- Gain a better understanding of language benchmarks in general and how a language assessment tool is developed
 - Learn from one another regarding language assessment and what is happening in various jurisdictions
 - Identify some of the broader contexts, opportunities and possible uses of a language assessment tool
 - Identify some of the possible implications of implementation of a language assessment tool and how it relates to the overall evaluation process
 - Gain consensus on the idea of working collectively towards a possible pan-Canadian language assessment tool suitable for both occupational therapy and physiotherapy
2. Joseph Vibert, CEO of The Alliance, provided attendees with an overview of the project’s history and objectives. He discussed how the current initiative complements other work The Alliance has recently completed related to the integration of internationally educated physiotherapists and emphasised the benefits of working collaboratively on this initiative with the occupational therapy community.

3. Marianne Kaye of the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB), presented findings from the language benchmarking component of the project. She explained the benchmarking methodology that was employed, provided practical examples of language use at given levels, and provided a summary of the overall research findings. Data collected showed that OTs and PTs carry out a range of language tasks levels that are almost identical for both professions. The CCLB analysis determined that the following benchmarks reflect the language tasks associated with their typical job tasks: Speaking CLB 8, Listening CLB 8, Reading CLB 9, Writing CLB 8.

Marianne and her research associates (Marisa Mazzulla and Karen Geraci) addressed questions from the floor related to the benchmarking methodology and potential development of a profession-specific language assessment tool. A number of important points arose from these discussions:

- The language benchmarks set out by CCLB are established by analyzing tasks at the entry-to-practice level.
- The language assessment tool will not cover all tasks of all individual OTs/PTs in the workplace. There will still be some job-specific tasks unique to specific situations that employers will still need to screen individuals for entry. The language benchmarks that were recorded and analyzed cover the common entry level task requirements in a broad range of situations.
- The language assessment tool assesses language capability/capacity in workplace situations. It is not meant to be an indicator of professional competency.

Participants were also given an opportunity to share any concerns they had related to the benchmarking process. Comments included:

- Have all potential OT and PT roles been adequately observed – what about management positions or academia?
 - Are the task examples cited in the report consistent across Canada?
 - North-western Ontario may have some different workplace situations/contexts that were not observed by CCLB researchers.
 - Is there a need to increase the recommended CCLB level of reading to 10, in order to account for the use of academic journals as part of the professions' "evidence-based practice" requirements?
4. During the afternoon session provincial OT and PT regulators from across Canada were asked to consider the potential benefits and challenges of implementing a single, pan-

Canadian, profession-based language test as a condition of licensure. A number of benefits were cited by regulators, including:

- **Increased efficiencies** in administration, awareness, and implementation across Canada, particularly for smaller jurisdictions
- **Collaborative benefits** of OT and PT working together
- **Increased accessibility**, i.e. number of locations to take the test and in number of times it could be offered (through greater numbers across the country)
- **Partnership potential** with possible future inclusion of other related professions
- **Increased validity** of assessment, through greater opportunity for more versions/questions, greater numbers taking the assessment, greater consistency of language assessment across the country
- **Impact assessment opportunity** through use of pilot and follow-up assessments by identifying potential impacts to assess through pilots
- **Increased benefit to internationally educated applicants** through constructive feedback on strengths and weaknesses identified by performance on language assessment test

Potential challenges related to the development and administration of a single, profession-specific language test were also put forth by participants.

- **Accessibility:** A single, profession-specific test must be widely available (locations and frequency). Would it become an enabler or a barrier as compared to other tests of general language proficiency?
- **Language testing alignment:** Should the language levels identified in the benchmarking report be reflected in entry-to-practice exams?
- **Sustainability:** Can test maintenance and administration costs be kept at a reasonable level; will there be enough test takers to ensure sustainability and affordability for clients?
- **Global best practices:** Can we learn from similar work being done in other jurisdictions (i.e. Australia)?
- **Evaluation:** How do we measure/assess the benefits and or drawbacks of implementing a new language test?

- **Process:** How will the newly developed test fit into the credentialing/exam processes of both professions?
5. As a final order of business, regulators were asked to participate in a visioning exercise. “What intermediate steps are required for the assessment tool to be offered and accepted in all of Canada’s OT/PT jurisdictions?” Comments were as follows:
- Inform and secure buy-in of key stakeholders including relevant boards of directors and councils.
 - Develop a feasibility study projecting the potential market size and costs for a single, profession-specific language test.
 - Analyze the risks associated with introducing a new test relative to the status quo.
 - Review similar tools used in related jurisdictions and professions.
 - Secure additional funding to pilot the test in Ontario and/or across Canada.
 - Provide regular opportunities for continued dialogue between OT and PT regulators on this matter.
 - Discuss the impact/perception of introducing a new language test with provincial Fairness Commissioners.

6. Next Steps

The feedback provided by participants at the Stakeholder Meeting will be reviewed and discussed by the project’s Management Committee. Based on these discussions the overall project plan may be adjusted and additional research commissioned. A request for proposal will be developed and distributed to those individuals/firms capable of translating the CCLB benchmarking report into a profession-specific language test suitable for use by both OT and PT regulators. It is anticipated that a field-tested version of the language assessment tool and a feasibility study for piloting the test in one or more Canadian jurisdictions will be completed by the summer of 2011.

7. Meeting Participants

Name	Organization
Alison Cooper	The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators
Barb Worth	College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
Brenda Hudson	College of Physical Therapists of British Columbia
Brenda McKechnie	College of Physiotherapists of Manitoba
Caroline Gill	Therapy Health Care
Catherine Lewis	Red River College
Claudia von Zweck	Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
Coralie Lennea	Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists
Dianne Millette	Alberta College and Association of Physiotherapists
Elinor Larney	College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario
Elizabeth Steggles	McMaster University
Gail Hall	Facilitator
Gayle Salsman	College of Occupational Therapists of Nova Scotia
Heather Cutcliffe	Prince Edward Island Occupational Therapists Registration Board
Iain Muir	University of Alberta
Jan Robinson	College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
Joan Ross	Nova Scotia College of Physiotherapists
Joseph Vibert	The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators
Karen Geraci	Researcher
Keith Johnson	Project Manager
Lesya Dyk	Lesya Dyk OT Services
Mara Simmonds	Alberta College and Association of Physiotherapists
Marianne Kayed	Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks
Marisa Mazzula	Researcher
Pat Edney	Alberta College of Occupational Therapists
Peter Dilworth	North Hamilton Community Health Centre
Rebecca Bourdage	College of Physiotherapists of New Brunswick
Shannon Gouchie	Sudbury Regional Hospital
Shari Hughes	College of Physiotherapists of Ontario
Sharon Eadie	College of Occupational Therapists of Manitoba
Sue Ferguson	Therapacc Rehabilitation
Susan Mulholland	College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia
Tabasom Eftekari	The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators
Tom Carter	Canadian Back Institute
Wilma Jelley	University of Ottawa