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Mental Health Promotion in Occupational Therapy

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Background and proposal process

Occupational therapy is rooted in mental health, however only 2% of occupational therapists work in mental health settings. Barriers in mental health practice result in fewer opportunities for student preparation, and this may contribute to the shortage in this field. Individuals with a physical disability have a higher risk of experiencing mental health issues and psychosocial changes throughout recovery. Given the connection between physical and mental health, occupational therapists are afforded the opportunity to address mental health issues across all practice settings.

This capstone experience took place at Cleveland State University to identify gaps in the CSU OTD mental health curriculum based on current OT practice, to identify barriers in practice, and to gather evidence of mental health promotion in current practice. The outcome is a resource for OT students and practitioners to use to enhance advocacy for occupational therapy's scope of practice in mental health.

Brief bio

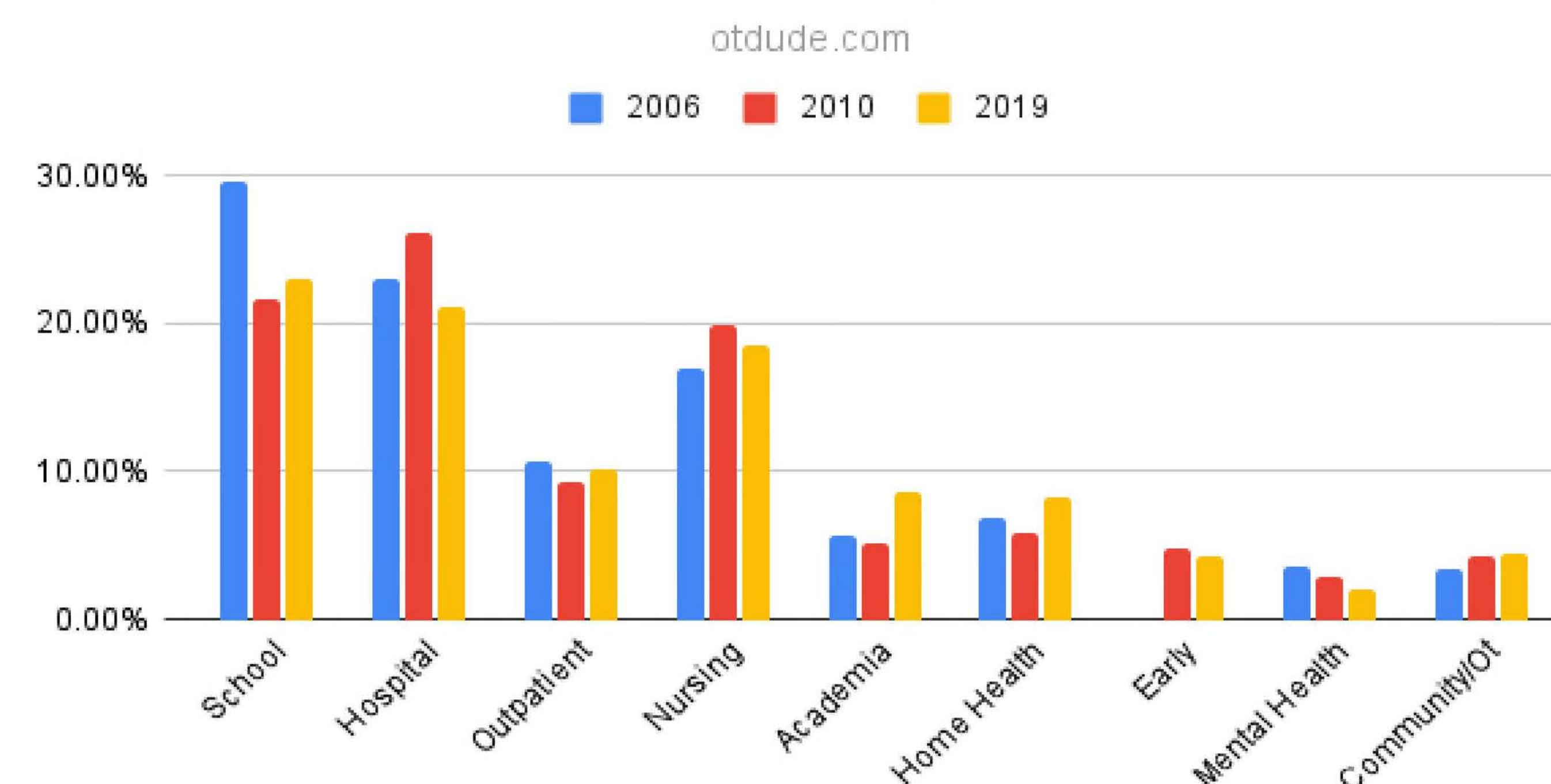
I am an occupational therapy doctoral student at Cleveland State University graduating in May 2023. I received my undergraduate degree in psychology at Miami University in 2020. My passions include working with individuals with developmental disabilities and mental health promotion and wellness among all ages.



Capstone activities

- Participated in mental health related courses including positive psychology, mental health first aid, anxiety, suicide prevention, mindfulness, and stress reduction
- Completed AOTA's Participation, Resilience, and Wellness Micro Credential course bundle
- Met with occupational therapists to identify barriers in mental health in practice and strategies used in practice
- Investigated mental health scope of practice and legislation
- Gathered information from occupational therapists and investigated to identify advocacy efforts related to mental health practice
- Analyzed the CSU OTD curriculum by meeting with professors and reviewing courses
- Learned and practiced techniques for clinical supervision and classroom teaching by participating as a teaching assistant for service learning at SAW, Inc. to assist in supervision of OTD students leading occupation-based groups for individuals with developmental disabilities
- Created a website resource for mental health promotion in all settings with information on the importance, barriers, strategies in practice, advocacy, and resources to increase knowledge of mental health promotion

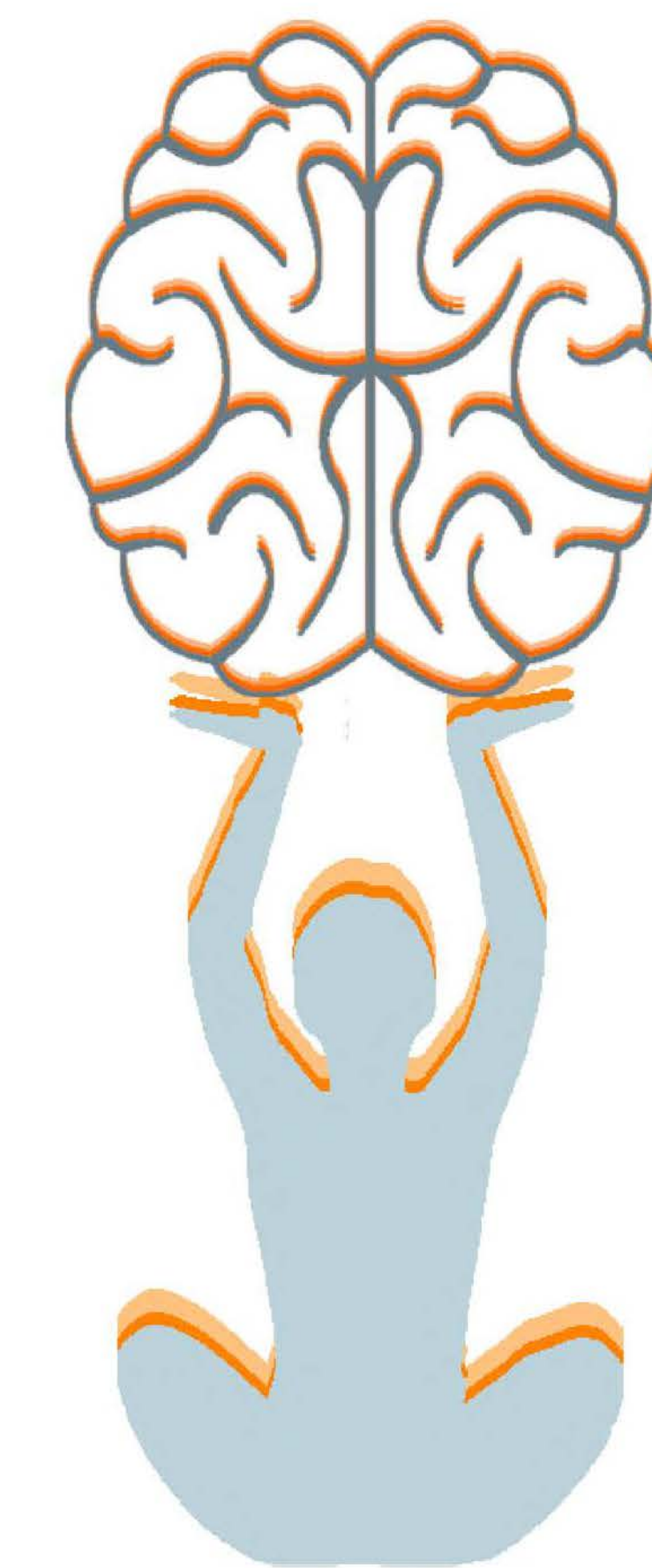
OT Practice Setting Trends



Where do occupational therapists work (settings and practice areas) – Workforce trends. (2022) OT Dude. <https://www.otdude.com/ot-practice/where-do-occupational-therapists-work-settings-and-practice-areas-workforce-trends/>

Takeaways

It is important for occupational therapists to understand our role in promoting mental health to stay true to our holistic approach. We need to advocate for our ability to support our clients in all aspects of their lives. Every client is a mental health client!



Occupational therapy: A holistic approach to wellness. (n.d.). Tilton's Therapy. <https://tiltonstherapy.com/occupational-therapy>

Key references

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American Occupational Therapy Association. (2023). *Mental health and well-being*. AOTA. <https://www.aota.org/practice/clinical-topics/mental-health>

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2016). *Mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention across the lifespan*. AOTA. <https://www.aota.org/-/media/corporate/files/practice/mentalhealth/distinct-value-mental-health.pdf>

Specialized knowledge and skills in mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention in occupational therapy practice. (2010). *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 64(6). <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2010.64S30>

Acknowledgements

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