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Sarah McKinnon
MGH Institute of Health Professions

Natalie Petrone

Amanda Tarbet

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The Role of an Occupational Therapy Practitioner in Professional Advocacy: a Scoping Review

Abstract

Background: Participation in professional advocacy amongst occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) is necessary for strengthening the profession. Although advocacy remains essential for practice, specific activities of OTPs in professional advocacy remain inconsistent and unclear.

Purpose: To examine the activities occupational therapy practitioners are engaging in related to professional advocacy. To identify key strategies and future opportunities to strengthen OT practitioner participation in professional advocacy.

Methods: We systematically searched 4 databases and 1 search engine for relevant articles- MEDLINE via PubMed, The Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) Complete via Ebscohost, ERIC via Ebscohost, APA PsycInfo via OvidSP, and Google Scholar. A total of 1297 articles were retrieved and 69 underwent full-text review. The final review included 30 studies.

Findings: The key activities of OT practitioners engaging in professional advocacy included five themes: empowering communities, engaging in advocacy organizations, involvement in policy-making process, outcome reporting, and staying current in professional issues. Opportunities to expand further OT practitioner involvement in professional advocacy were categorized into three themes: leadership programming, creation of frameworks, and advocacy campaigns.

Conclusions and Relevance: Occupational therapy practitioners have a substantial role in strengthening the profession through professional advocacy; however, there are opportunities to expand the knowledge and skills of OTPs in their role in professional advocacy and resources to support participation. Literature regarding professional advocacy in OT remains poorly researched.

Keywords: occupational therapy, professional advocacy, advocacy, policy, political action

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The Role of an Occupational Therapy Practitioner in Professional Advocacy: A Scoping Review

Sarah McKinnon, OT, OTD, OTR, BCPR, MPA, FAOTA, FNAP¹;
Natalie Petrone, OTD, OTR/L²; Amanda Tarbet, MSLS³

MGH Institute of Health Professions¹

Westbrook Public Schools²

SFPE Foundation³

United States

ABSTRACT

Background: Participation in professional advocacy amongst occupational therapy practitioners (OTPs) is necessary for strengthening the profession. Although advocacy remains essential for practice, specific activities of OTPs in professional advocacy remain inconsistent and unclear.

Purpose: To examine the activities in which occupational therapy practitioners engage related to professional advocacy. To identify current strategies and future opportunities to strengthen OT practitioner participation in professional advocacy.

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Findings: The key activities of OT practitioners engaging in professional advocacy included five themes: empowering communities, engaging in advocacy organizations, involvement in policy-making process, outcome reporting, and staying current in professional issues. Opportunities to expand further OT practitioner involvement in professional advocacy were categorized into three themes: leadership programming, creation of frameworks, and advocacy campaigns.

Conclusions and Relevance: Occupational therapy practitioners have a substantial role in strengthening the profession through professional advocacy; however, there are also opportunities to expand the knowledge and skills of OTPs in their role in professional advocacy as well as resources to support participation. Literature regarding professional advocacy in OT remains poorly researched.

Plain Language Summary

Engagement in professional advocacy is important for the growth and sustainability of the occupational therapy professional. The roles and strategies of OTPs engagement in professional advocacy are unclear and inconsistent across the literature. This scoping review explored the activities in which OTPs engage related to professional advocacy. It also suggests strategies and future opportunities to strengthen participation in professional advocacy. Dissemination of the activities, strategies, and opportunities can support future participation in professional advocacy. Additional research is needed to support advocacy efforts and highlight the impact advocacy has on the OT profession.

The Role of an Occupational Therapy Practitioner in Professional Advocacy: A Scoping Review

Advocacy is “the process of supporting a cause, such as an idea, policy, or activity, that can directly affect a person or group’s well-being” (McKinnon, 2015, p. 16). Advocacy is a foundational skill contributing to professional development and enhances the mission of occupational therapy (McKinnon, 2015; Jacobs, 2012). Advocacy is a part of professional development that can strengthen relationships between clients, students, practitioners, and knowledge users, including other health professions. *Professional advocacy* is a specific type of advocacy in which an individual engages to strengthen a profession, identify problems at an institutional level, contribute to legislative change and influence population-based decisions (Grace, 2001). There are many opportunities for occupational therapy students and practitioners to engage in general advocacy; however, evidence suggests that there is a disconnect between knowledge of advocacy and involvement in *professional* advocacy. Although occupational therapy practitioners can directly affect the lives of clients through advocacy, participation in *professional* advocacy can feel daunting, and opportunities limited (Grace, 2001). Lack of knowledge of *professional* advocacy may impede client access to occupational therapy services.

The Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE®) Standards and Interpretive Guide require advocacy content within all entry-level programs (ACOTE, 2018). Therefore, all occupational therapy students and practitioners receive some level of education related to advocacy in required coursework prior to becoming practitioners. Although students begin to identify professional identity in undergraduate and graduate education, it is unclear how students acquire skills related to professional development, which includes advocacy participation (Turpin et al., 2012). In a literature review, students report minimal understanding of advocacy, lack of understanding of the connection to practice, and minimal tools and resources to support advocacy and political action strategies during school (Lyons et al., 2015; Restall & Ripat, 2008).

In addition to education targeting advocacy knowledge and engagement, students are encouraged to become members of their state and national associations, which may be a foundational step for professional advocacy. Despite steadily increasing membership of occupational therapy students and practitioners to the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), only 60,000 of approximately 200,000 eligible occupational therapy students and practitioners are AOTA members (AOTA, 2021a). The variance between the actual number of AOTA members and the eligible number of members is one example of a disconnect between the knowledge of professional advocacy and the participation in professional advocacy for occupational therapy students and practitioners. The decreased engagement in professional advocacy opportunities can be attributed to many factors, one of which may be the variance of advocacy education and the availability of professional advocacy education once becoming a practitioner. The discrepancy in perceived knowledge of policy and the perceived impact of professional advocacy participation on practice signifies an area for intervention and opportunity for further exploration.

Engaging in professional advocacy has many purposes, such as allowing practitioners to continue advancing the profession. This also includes communicating patient outcomes to support political action and systems change. The objective of this scoping review is to discover and synthesize the literature concerning the role of an occupational therapy practitioner in professional advocacy, the activities in which they are already engaged, and the strategies that currently exist in expanding knowledge, skills, and confidence of occupational therapy practitioners in areas of professional advocacy as it relates to political action and policy changes. To do this, we formulated the following research

questions: What are activities in which OT practitioners are currently engaged related to professional advocacy? What opportunities exist in strengthening occupational therapy practitioners' participation in areas of professional advocacy?

Method

The goal of this review was to retrieve, select, analyze, and synthesize literature that investigates the activities that OT practitioners engage in related to professional advocacy. It is our hope that this review will provide readers with insight into any current attempts and strategies that already exist for expanding knowledge, skills, and confidence of occupational therapy practitioners in areas of professional advocacy in order to expose opportunities for increasing professional advocacy amongst the profession. For methodological guidance, reviewers relied on the publications of Arksey & O'Malley (2005), Tricco et al. (2018), and Peters et al. (2020a). This scoping review is reported in accordance with the PRISMA-ScR reporting guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018).

This scoping review used the Population-Concept-Context (PCC) question framework to guide the research questions and search strategy (Peters et al., 2020a). The population is OT practitioners or students. The term "practitioners" includes occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants. The concepts are professional advocacy and the context is the role of OT practitioners. We designed a protocol before undertaking this scoping review, registered with the Open Science Framework (OSF) on October 5, 2021. The protocol was subsequently updated on March 22, 2022 to clarify the eligibility criteria and is now available at <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/Q6H3Y> (McKinnon et al., 2022). OSF does not provide registration numbers for protocols.

Publications were included in the scoping review if they were published in English; a primary source; discussed occupational therapy providers, educators, and/or students; or discussed any level of advocacy, such as individual advocacy and legislative advocacy. There were no restrictions on publication dates or countries of origin as advocacy is not a widely published topic in the literature and to provide a more robust pool of results. Publications could be peer-reviewed research, grey literature such as conference proceedings and dissertations, or expert opinion/commentary. Books, literature reviews and other secondary sources, and articles or reports not investigating or discussing the role of OT practitioners in policy and advocacy were not eligible for the review and excluded.

The review team searched the following databases on October 3, 2021: MEDLINE via PubMed, the Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) via Ebscohost, ERIC via Ebscohost, and APA PsycInfo via OvidSP. The team also searched using the Google Scholar search engine, of which the first 100 most recently published results were screened. Additionally, we conducted backwards and forwards citation searching on any included research articles using CitationChaser (Haddaway et al., 2021). We mined search results by hand the reference lists of literature reviews or other evidence syntheses for additional sources. Lastly, we searched for relevant documents on websites important to the OT profession such as the American Occupational Therapy Association.

All three team members, one of whom is a librarian, contributed to the design of the search strategy. The base strategy, intended for PubMed, is displayed in Table 1. The PubMed search was adapted for the other databases, Google Scholar, and the OT websites. The keywords and Mesh terms represent the three parts of population, concept and context. Additionally, the team used a PCC framework to guide the search in Table 2.

Records of search results were managed within the software application Covidence (Veritas Health Innovation, n.d.), a tool for performing and managing review projects. Covidence stores search

results records, full text PDFs for the full text review stage, the data extraction template and results, automatically detects and removes duplicates, and documents the flow of papers through the process for the future PRISMA flow diagram.

Table 1

PubMed/MEDLINE search strategy

Strategy	Terms
<i>Population</i>	"Occupational therap*" "Occupational Therapy"[Mesh]
<i>Concept</i>	Advocacy Advocat* Policy Policymaking "Patient Advocacy"[Mesh] "Public Policy"[Mesh]
<i>Context</i>	Role Purview "Scope of practice" Duty Opportunit* Sphere "Scope of Practice"[Mesh] "Professional Role"[Mesh:NoExp]
<i>PubMed Search String</i>	("Occupational therap*" [tiab] OR "Occupational Therapy" [Mesh]) AND (Advocacy [tiab] OR Advocat* [tiab] OR Policy [tiab] OR Policymaking [tiab] OR "Patient Advocacy" [Mesh] OR "Public Policy" [Mesh]) AND (Role [tiab] OR Purview [tiab] OR "Scope of practice" [tiab] OR Duty [tiab] OR Opportunit* [tiab] OR Sphere [tiab] OR "Scope of Practice" [Mesh] OR "Professional Role" [Mesh:NoExp])

Table 2

PCC Framework

Population	Concept	Context
OT practitioners or students	Advocacy	The role of OT practitioners
The term "practitioners" includes occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants.	Advocacy can include advocating for the OT profession, self-advocacy or advocating for one's clients.	

Two independent reviewers (SM and NP) screened titles and abstracts and then reviewed full text for eligibility. When conflicts in decisions arose, the reviewers discussed the conflicts face-to-face before making a final decision. All selection processes took place within Covidence, which has mechanisms for blinded title/abstract screening and full text review, and flags conflicts between the reviewers.

Data extraction was performed within Covidence, using a custom template of the data items. Two extractors independently charted the data, then discussed the results and came to a consensus on any discrepancies. The following data items were extracted from eligible sources, as recommended by JBI (Peters et al., 2020b): author(s), year of publication, origin/country of origin where the source was published and/or where the study was conducted, aims/purpose of the study or paper, population and sample size within the source of evidence (if applicable), setting (if applicable), methodology / methods (if applicable), intervention type, comparator and details of these (e.g. duration of the intervention) (if applicable), outcomes and details of these (e.g. how measured) (if applicable), key findings that relate to the scoping review question/s, level of evidence as described by Logan, et al. (2008).

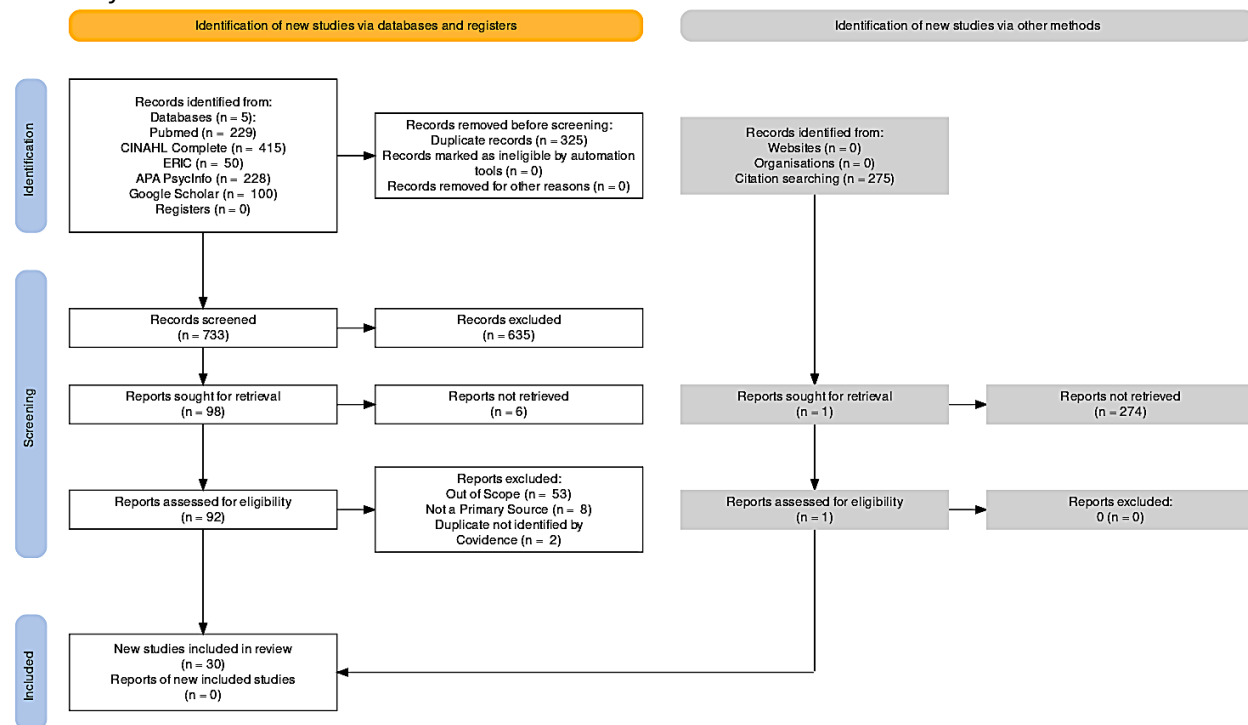
Researchers conducted qualitative analysis of the data to examine the activities in which occupational therapy practitioners engaged related to professional advocacy, and to make recommendations for future research and practice. Researchers used thematic analysis to enrich their understanding of the common threads in the literature (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Two authors separately identified themes within the eligible papers, then reviewed together for initial consensus of categories. Further analysis included iterative sampling in which themes were reassessed by a random sampling of papers. All three authors came to a consensus on the final thematic categories.

Results

A total of 922 results were retrieved from the electronic databases, and another 100 from Google Scholar, for a total of 1022 items. Another 275 titles were hand-searched via forward and backward citation searching or from literature reviews. After Covidence removed 325 duplicates, 972 items were screened, and 98 of those were deemed eligible for full-text review. The full text of 6 of these could not be retrieved, thus the full-text of 92 articles was reviewed. Of those 92, 63 were excluded for the following reasons: out of scope of this review (52), not a primary source (8), duplicate not identified by Covidence (2). Results were deemed out of the scope of this review if the focus was on only self-advocacy and client advocacy, as the purpose of the study was to examine the importance of professional advocacy. In total, 30 publications fit the inclusion criteria and were included in this scoping review. Figure 1 is the PRISMA flow diagram for this review.

The aim of this scoping review was to identify the role of the OT practitioner in professional advocacy and identify attempts and/or strategies to expand knowledge, skills and confidence of OT practitioners in the area of professional advocacy, as supported by literature. Among the 30 articles, a variety of themes emerged. Reviewers characterized into five themes key activities in which OT practitioners engage related to professional advocacy: empowering clients, families, and community members; engaging in association and advocacy organizations; involvement in policy making process; sharing professional value and outcome reporting; and staying current in professional issues and trends. Reviewers categorized key strategies and opportunities to expand knowledge and skills of OT practitioners in areas of professional advocacy into three themes: leadership programming, creation of advocacy frameworks to guide practitioner education, and advocacy campaigns with non-traditional dissemination modalities. Several articles were used in more than one of the above themes. A supplemental evidence table provides an overview of country, key objectives, level of evidence and themes identified below.

Figure 1
PRISMA for literature review



Key Activities Amongst OT Practitioners Related To Professional Advocacy

Following analysis, key activities involving practitioners in professional advocacy were identified. These included five key themes, all of which included succinct examples of how practitioners were engaging in professional advocacy within their workplaces, communities, or professional associations.

Empowering Clients, Families, and Community Members

Six articles identified a key activity of the OT practitioner to empower community members (Carlisle, 2000; Cyr, 2015; Laverdure, 2017; vanBruggen, 2014; Kirsh, 2015; Carrier, et al., 2021). Frequently cited as examples included empowering clients to advocate for themselves and marginalized communities (Carlisle, 2000; van Bruggen, 2014; Kirsh, 2015). OT practitioners who engage in dialogue with their communities, including parent groups and local education agencies, provide an assertive role within the policy landscape (Laverdure, 2017; Kirsch, 2015). The role of OT practitioner as a *change agent*, to adapt, advocate, design and educate others, was a concept that leads to client, family and/or community engagement (Kirch, 2015; Cyr, 2015; Carrier, et al., 2021). Connecting with communities, understanding societal effects of occupational deprivation, and empowering clients to be advocates within their community are roles for OT practitioners to change social policy and political action (Cyr, 2015; Carrier, et al, 2021).

Engaging In Association and Advocacy Organizations

Seven articles identified engagement in association and advocacy organizations through membership and/or activity as a role of the OT practitioner (Braveman & Metzler, 2012; Harvey, 1985;

Smith, 2004; Lamb, 2019; Clark-Brown, 2009; Bell, 1988; Anand & McCarthy, 2015). Practitioners can be part of change by volunteering on national association work groups, providing consultation to national association advocacy staff, and developing educational materials for association members (Braveman & Metzler, 2012; Smith, 2004; Clark, 2009; Bell, 1988). Engagement in an association can support connection with community partners, self-education, and optimizing efforts by a group or coalition with similar concerns (Harvey, 1985). Membership in associations can also collectively strengthen grassroots efforts and provide more opportunities to have voices heard about the profession (Clark-Brown, 2009; Lamb, 2019; Anand & McCarthy, 2015).

Involvement in Policy-Making Process

Eight articles identified a key role of the OT practitioner in professional advocacy to advance advocacy and policy as active contributors to the policy making process (Cameron & Masterson, 1998; Harvey, 1985; Hildebrand, 2016; Thomas & Metzler, 2006; Osman, et al., 2020; Marfeo, 2020; Aldrich & Rudman, 2020; Anand & McCarthy, 2015). The lack of preparation OT practitioners have in policy making was frequently cited in the literature; however, legislative activity for a profession requires ongoing action at the practitioner level (Harvey, 1985; Hildebrand, 2016; Cameron & Masterson, 1998). Involvement in the policy-making process may include developing, sponsoring, and lobbying for legislation (Harvey, 1985; Anand & McCarthy, 2015), asserting professional voice through active involvement in policy-making at institutional roundtables (Hildebrand, 2016), building relationships and developing statements (Osman, et al., 2020). Specific areas for targeted roles within the policy-making process include quality, allocation and delivery of resources (Cameron & Masterson, 1998).

Sharing Professional Value and Outcome Reporting

Five articles identified a key activity of the OT practitioner related to professional advocacy was to share professional value and use outcomes when reporting value (Lamb & Metzler, 2014; Cameron & Masterson, 2015; Harvey, 1985; Boniface & Anand, 2018; Dhillon, et al., 2010). Value of the profession has been commonly shared through storytelling and narratives (Dhillon, et al., 2010), but means for sharing data and outcomes to further explain the value of occupational therapy is a role of OT practitioners (Lamb & Metzler, 2014; Boniface & Anand, 2018). In fact, occupational therapy practitioners have gained recognition as essential health care providers for advice, perspective and consultation (Boniface & Anand, 2018). Furthermore, any opportunity to share professional value by connecting practice to alternative methods for cost containment, involvement in community-based care transitions, leadership in independence at home initiatives, and opportunities in patient-centered outcomes can make the profession of higher value with a stronger return on investment (Lamb & Metzler, 2014; Harvey, 1985; Cameron & Masterson, 1998).

Staying current in societal and political issues

Six articles identified that staying current in societal and political issues is a key activity and role of OT practitioners in professional advocacy and advancing advocacy and policy (Carswell-Opzoomer, 1990; Ellek, 1990; Thomas & Metzler, 2006; Finlayson, 2013; Marfeo, 2020; Clark-Brown, 2009). Without being informed of issues, one cannot advocate effectively and confidently (Ellek, 1990). OT practitioners have the professional responsibility to remain educated and identify strategies of how to stay current on societal and political issues related to OT practice (Carswell-Opzoomer, 1990). In addition to the actual political issues, practitioners must focus continuing education on developing a deeper understanding of factors related to health, participation, and quality of life, as often these factors drive public policy (Marfeo, 2020). Practitioners who integrate content related to political systems, legislation, negotiation and marketing skills into their ongoing professional development may develop fluency in policy-level language to frame problems and solutions (Finlayson, 2013; Marfeo, 2020; Ellek, 1990). Understanding

societal and political trends can also support advocacy in keeping evidence-based guidelines current (Thomas & Metzler, 2006) and establishing goals to engage in learning activities about societal and professional issues should be included in professional development goal setting (Clark-Brown, 2009).

Expanding Knowledge, Skills, and Confidence of Occupational Therapy Practitioners in Professional Advocacy and Policy

The above section described the various activities that practitioners are engaging in related to professional advocacy. Separate from the activities that practitioners are engaging in, there are also documented efforts to further educate OT students, practitioners, and educators, in their role in professional advocacy and policy. These reveal opportunities to further expand one's knowledge, skills, and confidence in professional activities, three key themes in the literature that were identified as attempts to expand this knowledge.

Leadership Programming

There have been some attempts to expand knowledge and skills of OT practitioners in the areas of professional advocacy and policy, but documented examples and strategies are minimal. In this scoping review, two articles identified an attempt to expand knowledge and skills of OT practitioners in advocacy through leadership programming through an association (Rahimaly, et al., 2019; Lapointe, et al., 2013). A continuing education program and toolkit which included acquiring the knowledge and skills required to act as a social change agent (SCA) is one approach in Canada that supports development in the area of advocacy leadership (Rahimaly, et al., 2019). Additionally, in order to foster leadership and mentorship in advocacy, Lapointe described the Canadian Association for Occupational Therapy (CAOT) Fellowship and online mentorship program (Lapointe, et al., 2013).

Creation of Advocacy Frameworks to Guide Practitioner Education

Two articles identified an attempt to expand knowledge and skills of OT practitioners in advocacy by creation of advocacy frameworks to guide practitioner education (Carrier & Contandriopoulos, 2015; Freeman, et al., 2017). Both frameworks described a six-step model (SUCCEs Model, Carrier & Contandriopoulos, 2015) and an eight-step model (Freeman, et al., 2017) as a step-by-step guide for communication that can optimize knowledge translation and support lobbying planning. The SUCCEs Model's six strategies include communication that is simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional and connected to a story (Carrier & Contandriopoulos, 2015). Freeman, et al. (2017) outlined "an eight-step approach to advocacy,": 1. Determining the key messaging, 2. Identifying the context, 3. Determining specific objectives, 4. Determining a process to assess the effects of the advocacy interventions, 5. Targeting partners, 6. Choosing and planning interventions, 7. Planning methods to collect data, and 8. Monitoring and adjusting interventions. OT associations can facilitate advocacy initiatives through association planning. Although these frameworks are mentioned in the literature, the scoping review did not yield results that included implementation of these initiatives.

Advocacy Campaigns and Non-Traditional Dissemination Modalities

Advocacy campaigns and non-traditional disseminations is the final theme related to strategies and attempts to address advocacy efforts. Four articles identified an attempt to expand knowledge and skills of OT practitioners in advocacy through advocacy campaigns and non-traditional dissemination modalities (Lamb, 2019; Hubbard, 2021; Harvey, 1985; Carrier, et al., 2021). Platforms such as CommunOT through the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) (Lamb, 2019), podcasts and websites (Hubbard, 2021), media (Harvey, 1985) and mass communication (Carrier, et al., 2021) are examples of how campaigns can be disseminated to enhance advocacy attempts. Carrier, et al. (2021) suggest an underinvestment in mass communication and lack of experience limit frequent use of these modalities, although it is emerging.

Discussion

This scoping review examines the various activities in which OT practitioners engage related to professional advocacy, which may increase OT practitioners' knowledge and skills in systems change, and contribute to the legislative process. The review yielded results from four different countries which may support participation in advocacy and policy that affects the profession globally. The review revealed, however, the continued absence of unified and consistent roles of OT practitioners in professional advocacy. Despite attempts to guide advocacy education or action, there are minimal examples documented in literature to support diverse advocacy strategies, success of advocacy initiatives, or a collective approach to enhancing advocacy knowledge, skills, and confidence of OT practitioners. The reviewed literature indicated that professional advocacy specifically related to legislation is important and that OT practitioners have a role in advancing legislative changes, but that approaches are minimal, varied, and not measured. Opportunities to strengthen the role of occupational therapy practitioners in professional advocacy may include further education and opportunities within educational programs, clinical practice settings, and professional associations.

This scoping review confirms the lack of peer-reviewed literature related to professional advocacy in occupational therapy, particularly what could, should and is being done to empower OT practitioners to advocate. Some barriers to engaging in advocacy initiatives were noted in the review, but did not necessarily identify solutions to addressing these barriers. Barriers to professional advocacy include high caseloads, challenging productivity standards, resource-poor work contexts, risk management priorities, or productivity and reimbursement requirements (Aldrich & Rudman, 2020). In addition to these barriers, the literature also suggests advocacy as reactive, rather than proactive (Osman, et al., 2020; Carlisle, 2000).

Many articles also cited the importance of advocacy, the need to address advocacy in the workplace, and the gap of action for occupational needs of all citizens and populations, rather than just the individual level (van Bruggen, 2014; Kirsh, 2015). Most often, occupational therapy practitioners advocate for individual clients on a case-by-case basis as a part of their client-centered practice, rather than creating change at the level of social policy and political action through professional advocacy (Kirsh, 2015; Carrier, et al., 2021). Aligning with a health care system that is requiring more outcomes-focused and quality improvement data to drive clinical decisions, the review did identify the importance of becoming more aware of cost-effective public policy decisions when conducting research, developing evidence-based guidelines, treating clients, or advocating with public policy makers and payers (Thomas & Metzler, 2006; Osman, et al., 2020).

The completion of a thematic analysis to address the review questions can support future educational and programmatic efforts to increase professional advocacy participation in the future. For example, the five themes identified to support the role of OT in engaging in professional advocacy (empowering clients, families, and community members, engaging in association and advocacy organizations, involvement in policy making process, sharing professional value and outcome reporting, staying current in societal and political issues) can support educational tools within occupational therapy programs and better support students' understanding of professional advocacy beyond the standard realm of client advocacy. Specific action steps related to education may include creation and integration of advocacy teaching tools from professional associations that could be used in OT education. There could also be a more robust pool of educational opportunities related to advocacy at state and national

conferences. Professional associations focused on continuing education opportunities and grassroots advocacy initiatives may use the identified themes of attempts to address professional advocacy (leadership programming, creation of advocacy frameworks to guide practitioner education, advocacy campaigns and non-traditional dissemination modalities) as both a guide to support continuing programming and professional development initiatives. Examples of this may include tools to create special interest groups (SIGs) within state associations and integration of professional advocacy learning tools free and accessible to all practitioners, regardless of membership affiliation.

As the overall results for this review lack explicit measurement, efficacy, and relevance, the review validates that a need to document professional advocacy activities, successes, and barriers, is essential to further engage OT practitioners for systems change, such as involvement in grassroots activities and the legislative process.

Limitations of the Scoping Review

A potential limitation of this review was the exclusion of primary sources, which include literature reviews and systematic reviews. Additionally, we excluded examples of advocacy that were explicitly focused only on client-centered advocacy initiatives, or a particular diagnosis and chose to focus on initiatives explicitly mentioning advocacy and policy. Including client-centered advocacy examples may have led to further examples of strategies to address advocacy or provided more information to support that there is a need for addressing advocacy in practice. Additionally, the rigor of research within the review was poor, as the majority of our search results were text and opinion pieces.

Future Research Directions

This review provides a glimpse at the available literature supporting that occupational therapy practitioners have a role in advancing advocacy and policy. Based on the study findings, there are many implications for advancing advocacy and policy specifically related to education, research, practice, and policy. In terms of education, it is unclear how graduate programs address advocacy participation in the student population and may benefit from the examination of current educational practices related to advocacy at the student level. Additionally, future literature might seek to investigate how to measure competency in advocacy participation as there is not a clear understanding of how to measure or metrics to measure related to the impact of advocacy participation. Additionally, although a typical output of advocacy participation is legislative change, there is an opportunity to further standardize how the impact of advocacy participation is measured at state and federal levels.

Overall, occupational therapy practitioners are well positioned to engage in advocacy initiatives in local, state, and national audiences; however, the literature does not reflect the effectiveness of these activities, how to measure this participation, and how to succinctly define and implement these roles in education and professional development. Overall, more occupational therapy research, along with continuing education and professional development, is warranted.

Knowledge Translation Takeaway

This scoping review has the following implications for occupational therapy practice and education, including how knowledge from this scoping review can inform education and clinical practice:

- Occupational therapy practitioners have an obligation and opportunity in professional advocacy to advance legislation and there are attempts to define these activities and explicit strategies in this review.
- Many OT practitioners and researchers agree that engagement in professional advocacy is important and can contribute to articulating the professional value of OT to support outcome reporting but barriers within their practice and knowledge of issues limit participation.

- There is a need to identify how to measure participation and success in professional advocacy and how participation directly impacts legislative changes to support the profession.
- Themes supporting the role of OT in engaging in professional advocacy can be used in educational programming for OT education and continuing professional development programming for novice and seasoned practitioners.
- This scoping review can inform knowledge users, which include occupational therapy practitioners, students, and educators, as to their roles in professional advocacy and spark engagement in the ways to be involved, as supported by the literature.

Conclusion

This scoping review indicated that there are various activities occupational therapy practitioners can engage in related to professional advocacy in order to strengthen the profession. Despite attempts to engage in roles that advance advocacy and policy, there are minimal examples documented in the literature to support diverse professional advocacy strategies, the success of professional advocacy initiatives, or a collective approach to enhancing advocacy knowledge, skills, and confidence of OT practitioners. The results of this study revealed the continued absence of unified and consistent roles of OT practitioners in professional advocacy, and particularly what could, should, and is being done to empower OT practitioners to participate.

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Appendix

Author	Country	Aim/Objective of Paper	Type of Publication	Theme(s)
Aldrich & Rudman, 2019	Canada	To define a street-level bureaucrat and explain how occupational therapists fill that role. To propose that occupational therapists respond to inter-related policies and systems in ways that can perpetuate, resist, or transform opportunities.	Qualitative research	Involved in policy making process
Anand & McCarthy, 2015	Canada	To describe CAOT's advocacy and lobbying efforts between 2014-2015	Text and opinion	Advocacy organization engagement; Involved in policy making process
Bell, 1988	United States	To provide examples of AOTA policies and procedures that can support advocacy	Text and opinion	Advocacy organization engagement
Boniface & Havelin, 2018	Canada	To identify framework and examples of role of OT in health advocacy.	Text and opinion	Sharing professional value and outcome reporting
Bravemen & Metzler, 2012	United States	To provide an overview to the Patient Protection and Affordable Health Care Act (PPACA) of 2010 and identify opportunities for occupational therapy	Text and opinion	Advocacy organization engagement
Cameron & Masterson, 1998	United Kingdom	To stimulate an awareness to occupational therapy practitioners to the importance of understanding social policy in everyday practice.	Text and opinion	Involved in policy making process; Sharing professional Value and outcome reporting
Carlisle, 2000	United Kingdom	Integrate existing models and definitions of health promotion and advocacy into a framework for considering the role of advocacy in addressing health inequalities.	Text and opinion	Empower community members
Carrier, et al., 2021	Canada	This study aimed to empirically identify occupational therapists' actual change agent actions.	Pilot cross sectional study	Non-traditional dissemination and advocacy campaigns
Carrier & Contandriopoulos, 2015	Canada	This brief report describes core principles in communication that can optimize knowledge	Text and opinion	Empower community members: Creation of

		translation, following the SUCCEs Model described by Heath and Heath (2007)		advocacy models to guide education
Carswell-Opzoomer, 1990	Canada	To review the Muriel Driver Memorial Lectures and analyze recurrent themes.	Text and opinion	Staying Current in societal and political issues
Clark-Brown, 2009	United States	To glean information about how a sample of leaders, clinicians and students from within the occupational therapy profession conceptualize and/or define advocacy, have learned to be advocates themselves, and the factors that they believe facilitate or impede serving as an advocate for the profession	Case report	Advocacy organization engagement; staying current in professional issues and trends
Cyr, 2015	Canada	Define the role of OT as change agents.	Text and opinion	Empower community members
Dhillon, et al., 2010	Canada	The objective of this article is to understand the meaning of advocacy for occupational therapists by exploring their reasons for advocating.	Interpretive phenomenological study	Sharing professional value and outcome reporting
Ellek, 1990	United States	This paper outlines changes to health care in the United States and how OTs can be involved in ensuring quality of care for individuals.	Text and opinion	Staying current in societal and political issues
Finlayson, 2013	Canada	This Muriel Driver lecture examines the change agent role, what it means, and what knowledge, skills, and personal qualities are necessary to be effective.	Text and opinion	Staying current in societal and political issues
Freeman, et al., 2017	Canada	Disseminating information gathered at the 2016 Occupational Therapy Canada Forum regarding promoting the occupational therapy profession.	Case report	Creation of advocacy models to guide education
Harvey, 1985	Canada	To describe a non-traditional role of gerontological occupational and physical therapists as advocates.	Text and opinion	Advocacy organization engagement; Involved in policy making process; Sharing professional

				Value and outcome reporting
Hildebrand, 2016	United States	To create bridging links between public administration scholarship in the areas of street-level bureaucracy and policy alienation and the occupational therapy profession	Text and opinion	Involved in policy making process
Hubbard, 2021	United States	To share results of doctoral capstone project, to make policy more digestible and relatable, and to connect the role of occupational therapy(OT) to advocacy and policy.	Text and opinion	Non-traditional dissemination and advocacy campaigns
Kirsh, 2015	Canada	This paper describes integrating advocacy into occupational therapy identity and discusses why we should advocate at political and public levels.	Text and opinion	Empower community members
Lamb, 2019	United States	To share leadership story as an advocate as part of an AOTA presidential farewell address.	Text and opinion	Advocacy organization engagement: Non-traditional dissemination and advocacy campaigns
Lamb & Metzler, 2014	United States	To establish opportunities for occupational therapy for the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act is implemented in 2014.	Text and opinion	Sharing professional Value and outcome reporting
Lapointe, et al., 2013	Canada	To energize occupational therapists with ideas for fostering leadership and mentorship initiatives to address gaps in healthcare.	Text and opinion	Practitioner training
Laverdure, 2017	United States	This paper will discuss key strategies that will enable OT practitioners meet the requirements of the recently passed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and step confidently into the advocacy role on behalf of our students, families, schools, and profession.	Text and opinion	Empower community members
Marfeo, 2020	United States	To discuss the Older American Act of 1965 and describes ways in which the objectives of	Text and opinion	Involved in policy making process; Staying current

		this legislation align with the principles and practice of occupational therapy.		in societal and political issues)
Osman, et al., 2020	Canada	Describe the approaches that Canadian occupational therapy organizations use to engage with and impact public policy.	Qualitative research: Interpretive description methodology	Advocacy organization engagement; Involved in policy making process
Rahimaly, et al., 2019	Canada	To support OTs in acquiring the knowledge and skills required to act as a SCA. Specifically, to develop an SCA continuing education program and toolkit, implement them and evaluate them according to the participants' perceptions of acquiring the knowledge and skills required to act as a SCA.	Non-randomized experimental study	Practitioner training
Smith, 2004	United States	To share case example of OT advocacy to prevent attempts by physical therapists to inappropriately expand their scope of practice	Text and opinion	Advocacy organization engagement
Thomas & Metzler, 2006	United States	This study outlines the importance of advocates contributing to research for the sake of improved outcomes for the profession.	Text and opinion	Involved in policy making process; Staying current in societal and political issues)
van Bruggen, 2014	Netherlands	To discuss the contribution of occupational therapy to social, educational and research reform in order to achieve social inclusion.	Text and opinion	Empower community members