

# SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES TO FORM MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS: A CASE EXAMPLE



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## PROJECT PARTNERS

School of Occupational Therapy, Dalhousie University

- 22-month full-time MSc(OT) degree provides students with opportunities for experiential & reflective learning within classroom & fieldwork learning sites

and

InteRACT Program (Intensive Residential Aphasia Communication Therapy) ([www.aphasiaaction.com](http://www.aphasiaaction.com))

- Offered by registered speech language pathologists & MSc speech language students
- 4½ week intensive training program for adults with all types of aphasia
- Participants live on-site with communication partners during 4½ week program



## OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

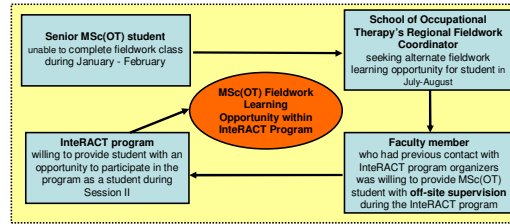
- Plans made by InteRACT program organizers to develop a one week educational program for adults with aphasia
- Request made to the School of Occupational Therapy to offer a 2-hour session on adaptive equipment
- Through this experience, we also asked: *"Is there room for occupational therapy within the InteRACT program? Could the InteRACT program the School of Occupational Therapy with a new fieldwork learning opportunity for senior MSc(OT) students?"*

## BARRIERS: Missed Opportunity?

- InteRACT was willing to serve as a fieldwork learning site for a senior MSc(OT) student – good opportunity for SLP students to interact directly with an OT student
- BUT there was a "mismatch" in the timing of the MSc(OT) curriculum & InteRACT program offerings

	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August
2 <sup>nd</sup> year (Senior) MSc(OT) Student Schedule	Fieldwork Learning (9 weeks, full-time)	Fieldwork Learning (9 weeks, full-time)	Fieldwork Learning (9 weeks, full-time)	Fieldwork Learning (9 weeks, full-time)	Academic Classes (6 weeks)	Academic Classes (6 weeks)	MSc(OT) program requirements completed	MSc(OT) program requirements completed
InteRACT Program					Session II (4 ½ weeks, full-time) (early July – early August) Fieldwork Learning for SLP students	Session II (4 ½ weeks, full-time) (early July – early August) Fieldwork Learning for SLP students		

## SEIZING an OPPORTUNITY



## CHALLENGES

- Address need identified by the InteRACT program (i.e., educate participants about adaptive equipment options) without: (a) being constrained by preconceived expectations & (b) infringing on roles assumed by others
- Finding times when participants were available given the structured design of the InteRACT program

Speech Language Pathology	<i>Individually-tailored sessions</i> to enhance communication skills; some compensatory techniques introduced. <i>Computer lab activities</i> to provide alternative communication strategies. <i>Small group sessions</i> to practice communication skills in socially meaningful situations. <i>Community integration &amp; group meals</i> to use communication skills in real-life situations.
Therapeutic Recreation	<i>Individual &amp; group sessions</i> to explore new leisure occupations & identify strategies to engage in former leisure occupations.
Physiotherapy	<i>Group sessions</i> to support physical exercise.

## STRATEGIES for DEVELOPING a MEANINGFUL & MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL PARTNERSHIP

### 1. Supported Others in their Professional Roles

- Sought out & provided resources to support other team members' efforts
- Emphasized mutual focus on supporting participants' engagement in meaningful occupations



### 2. Provided Team with an Understanding of Participants' Well-being, Goals, Interests, Self-Efficacy & Skills

- Included occupational therapy assessments (i.e., Occupational Well-Being Questionnaire & Canadian Occupational Performance Measure) in initial assessment battery administered to all participants
- Observed participants engage in program activities

## STRATEGIES (cont'd)

### 3. Guided Participants & Communication Partners (as relevant) to Identify & Organize Meaningful, Health-Promoting Occupations into their Daily Routines

- Identified those dissatisfied with their occupational lives & worked with them to develop individualized wellness plans

### 4. Addressed Participants' Concerns about Performance of Everyday Occupations (e.g., shopping)

- Observed in daily occupations (e.g., shopping)
- Gave participants chances to use strategies to reduce effort & enhance efficiency, safety & independence
- Provided participants with individualized information packets related to adaptive equipment options including how to access items



### 5. Enabled Program to Evaluate Participation Outcomes

- Examined pre- & post-intervention rating changes of satisfaction with performance using the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure & Occupational Well-Being Questionnaire

## BENEFITS

- MSc(OT) student** learned to develop effective partnerships with team members, participants, & communication partners; to convey (in verbal & written form) the unique knowledge & skill set of occupational therapists; and to use a wide array of enablement skills to enhance participants' occupational well-being & performance in real-life contexts
- MSc speech language students & InteRACT staff** developed a broader understanding of occupational therapy
- InteRACT participants'** unmet occupational needs addressed
- OT faculty member (off-site preceptor)**, through the MSc(OT) student, trialed assessment & program ideas
- OT faculty member & InteRACT staff** established a relationship that is now providing an opportunity to develop ideas for collaborative research projects

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