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CONTACT: Heather R. Huhman
(301) 652-6611 x 2963
praota@aota.org

WHITE HOUSE ANNOUNCES HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY JOBS WILL REMAIN STRONG THROUGH 2016

Occupational Therapy a Perfect Fit for Employers' Future Needs

Bethesda, MD — The White House Council of Economic Advisors recently released a report stating “health care is forecasted to remain a large source of job growth in the labor market” through 2016. *Preparing the Workers of Today for the Jobs of Tomorrow* describes employers’ continuing need for employees who can “think critically and solve problems” and have a “post-secondary education.” The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) says the reason occupational therapy continues receiving accolades by organizations such as *U.S. News & World Report* as a “best” career is due—in part—to exactly these characteristics.

“Occupational therapy practitioners are compassionate, resourceful, creative, motivated,” said AOTA’s president Penelope A. Moyers, EdD, OTR/L, BCMH, FAOTA. “They want meaning in life, enjoy science and the arts, and have an interest in health care. They are good communicators and listeners. And finally, as the report notes will remain important to employers, occupational therapy practitioners have a knack for problem-solving.”

A career as an occupational therapist requires a student to complete either a professional master's degree or entry level doctoral degree. In addition to becoming an occupational therapist, a career as an occupational therapy assistant is also an option. Occupational therapy assistants earn an associate degree. All occupational therapy practitioners must complete supervised clinical fieldwork in a variety of health and educational settings. Passing a national certification and state regulation, including licensure, provide assurance of the authority of practitioners and protect the public.

The White House Council of Economic Advisors indicate in the report the growth in health care occupations does not take into account comprehensive health care reform. “Health care reform is expected to slow the growth rate of health spending as efficiency is improved. However, even with a slower growth rate of spending, the expected expansion of health coverage could lead to increased demand for workers...to cover the newly insured population,” the group stated. The report specifically mentions non-physician clinicians, which would include occupational therapy.

Moyers explains an entirely different reason for the occupational therapy demand. “Baby boomers are getting older, and they will need not only health care but also assistance living their lives to the fullest. That’s just what occupational therapy can provide—adjusting home design to meet changing needs and facilitate optimal activity, evaluating and providing training to improve driving skills as we age, and, of course, helping caregivers of those who are facing Alzheimer’s disease,” she said.

However, health care reform will impact all fields and industries—occupational therapy notwithstanding. “No one is immune from potential consequences and benefits,” said Christina A. Metzler, chief public affairs officer at AOTA. “AOTA is the voice and guide for members in this battle.”

Founded in 1917, the **American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA)** represents the professional interests and concerns of more than 140,000 occupational therapists, assistants and students nationwide. The Association educates the public and advances the profession of occupational therapy by providing resources, setting standards including accreditations and serving as an advocate to improve health care. Based in Bethesda, Md., AOTA’s major programs and activities are directed toward promoting the professional development of its members and assuring consumer access to quality services so patients can maximize their individual potential. For more information, go to www.aota.org.