

Alex Benjamin: My Journey



For Occupational Therapist Week 2020, we chat to a member of staff about their journey to becoming an Occupational Therapist (OT).

In this issue, we talk to Alex Benjamin, who is the principal occupational therapist at Cognus, and whose journey to become an OT began as a college student and an inspiring start to a career in OT.

For as long as I can remember, I have carried the spirit of occupational therapy with me. My parents were social workers and worked very hard to serve those they worked for in the areas of mental health, and children's services, but also to be present in our lives at the same time.

Although I always admired their work, I wanted to be able to 'do' more in terms of therapy. OT seemed to tick all the boxes, using everyday occupations as a therapeutic medium and the wide variety it offered. I was also very keen to work following college and doing the OT degree meant I would become a registered OT within three years.

During my college years I studied health and social care, part of which included a field trip to India to study health and social care provision. In India, we had the most amazing experiences, and this inspired the beginning of my career as an OT.

I studied OT at Brunel University and really loved the variety the course offered, from anatomy and physiology, psychology, group therapies, to activities of daily living. While I was there, occupational science was born (the study of humans as occupational beings) and it felt like I was part of something greater and special.

My career started on a junior hospital rotation working in general medicine, neurology, trauma and orthopaedics, and inpatient rehabilitation. I then did community based falls prevention, rehabilitation, and then adults with learning disabilities and autism, where I decided to specialise and took on my first leadership role as a principal OT. This role opened a whole other world in being involved in the strategic planning and delivery of services, and learning the unique and valuable perspective occupational therapy can offer.

After 10 years with adults, I changed my role to working with children and young people in education which I loved, eventually leading to my current role as principal OT for Cognus Therapies.

What I love most about OT is that our focus is to enable help people to live their lives as independently and as fully as possible, its practical and creative in its nature, and empowering for the people we work with, making it the most fulfilling career.

This is why I love being an OT.

This is why I'll always #ChooseOT.

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