
Introduction to the Special Issue, Part I**The Future of Recreation Therapy/
Therapeutic Recreation Education**

M. Jean Keller, *Guest Editor*

Healthcare and social services are undergoing changes in the way services are delivered and so, too, education is experiencing many changes. It appeared to be a good time to reflect, evaluate, and advance recreation therapy/therapeutic recreation (RT/TR) professional preparation systems and methods of supporting the formation of competent, caring, and capable therapists to lead the profession in the 21st century. Over the years, the *Therapeutic Recreation Journal (TRJ)* has addressed numerous issues on education and professional preparation topics such as student enrollment, faculty compensation, administrative support, funding, curriculum, accreditation, certification, licensure, internships, graduation rates, and employment opportunities.

It has been said it is the best of times and the worst of times in higher education (Bok, 2013). The heterogeneity of education in some ways is similar to RT/TR—some organizations are public, others private; some large, others small; some narrowly focused, others broadly focused; and the list could go on. Using data, Bok (2013) identifies two areas of need of improvement in higher educa-

tion: 1) increasing the percentage of students who graduate from college, and 2) improving the quality of undergraduate education. Bok (2013) concludes the faculty care about students and need to better understand how to create environments that support their learning. RT/TR professional organizations, accrediting and credentialing organizations, and preparation programs are exploring what students need to know, reforming curriculum, and assessing these efforts to determine if students are learning what they need to know to be successful in the RT/TR workforce. Education and RT/TR have, are, and will continue to contribute in meaningful ways to our communities, culture, diversity, and economy if all continue to make the necessary changes to improve our systems.

Contributors to this two-part special issue on The Future of Recreation Therapy/Therapeutic Recreation Education stimulate a discussion on past, present, and future work that will facilitate improvements in the professional preparation of therapeutic recreation specialists. In the first of this two-part special issue, we will look back to move forward.

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Carter, Zabriskie, Anderson, and Jansen review the history of accreditation through the Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COARPT) model. This work began in mid-1970s and chronicles the changes up to recent adjustments which include a review of the scope practice and learner outcomes.

As noted above, the mission and vision of American higher education is being challenged by many. An article by Stumbo, Zahl, and Pegg explores various issues and trends in higher education and their implications for RT/TR. An implication the authors share is faculty must realize the need for educational reform and step forward to make changes to enhance teaching effectiveness related to student learning outcomes. Building on past work in 1996, 2003, and 2005, the 2012 therapeutic recreation curriculum survey was completed to re-examine, update, and compare results over time of curriculum changes in the United States and Canada. RT/TR faculty are stimulating discussions on what students need to know to be successful practitioners and designing curricular reform and assessments accordingly.

In the next issue, two articles will explore the two accreditation processes for RT/TR college and university professional preparation programs. Lynn S. Anderson describes the development of the guidelines for learning outcomes for therapeutic recreation education for those seeking COARPT accreditation. The learning outcomes focus on therapeutic recreation foundations, process, administration, and internship with emphasis on evaluation. Thomas K. Skalko shares information about the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education and the Committee on Accreditation for Recreation Therapy Education (CARTE)

accreditation program for RT/TR education programs. The focus of CARTE is the need for an independent accreditation for RT/TR as an allied health profession. The CARTE outcomes are based on the American Therapeutic Recreation Association's *Guidelines for Competency Assessment and Curriculum Planning in RT Practice*.

In order to improve the quality of undergraduate education, RT/TR faculty are challenged to engage students in discovering new ideas. Innovative faculty from Douglas College with undergraduate students are developing a research culture through community engagement. The integration of research, teaching, and learning is designed to prepare therapeutic recreation specialists who can deliver evidence-based practice upon graduation. The final article embraces intergenerational learning within the therapeutic recreation classroom and curriculum as a means for exploring aging processes. Genoe, Lewis, Johnson, Sutherland, and Goldberg share the importance of innovative teaching and learning practices and the challenges in preparing and readying students to benefit from new ways of instruction. Both articles are illustrations of faculty's dedication to provide meaningful learning experiences to prepare RT/TR professionals for the future.

Sincerest thanks are expressed to the contributors of this two-part special issue on The Future of Recreation Therapy/Therapeutic Recreation, who believe in the future of RT/TR education and are working to make it more effective and efficient. The manuscript reviewers worked in a competent, caring, and timely manner providing constructive recommendations that made the articles meaningful to the RT/TR profession. The reviewers contributed to this work with their feedback regarding rigor, relevance, and

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Reference

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