

**2010 Spring Symposium Speaker Biographies**  
**Presented in alphabetical order by last name**



bipolar disorder.

**Valerie Adams, MA, OTR/L**, has been the Coordinator of Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy services for the Long Beach Unified School District since 2002. She previously owned a non-public agency that provided OT and PT services to over 20 school districts in Southern California. Mrs. Adams has presented frequently on topics related to school-based services, autism, and



CCS Constraint Induced Movement Therapy (CIMT) work group that developed a protocol, and implemented the pilot study, for the intervention. Dr. Anvarizadeh is also involved with the Communications Committee of the Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC) serving as the co-editor of the newsletter.

**Arameh Anvarizadeh, OTD, OTR/L**, is a 2007 alumna of the University of Southern California. Her work focused on developing healthy lifestyle programs for community grassroots organizations. She is currently working at California Children's Services (CCS), evaluating and treating children with neuromuscular disorder. She had the privilege of being part of the



activities. Ms. Cases received her DIR (The Developmental, Individual-Difference, Relationship-Based) certificate in 2007 and has served as Faculty for the DIR Summer Institute in 2008 and 2009. She has integrated the treatment modality, Solisten/TOMATIS effect and sound intervention into her practice.

**Marjorie Cases, OTR/L**, graduated from Montreal University, Canada, with a degree in Occupational Therapy. She is currently the managing director of Therapy Works for Kids™ in Havertown PA. She also consults with different programs across the United States, including the CreekSide School in San Jose, CA, providing support in adding sensory based intervention and facilitating engagement and social reciprocity in a student's daily



completed the first CIMT pilot study within CCS. She has volunteered for various organizations serving people with special needs such as Easter Seals, Special Olympics, Best Buddies and United Cerebral Palsy.

**Mindy Charmack, MA, OTR/L**, is employed by Los Angeles County, California Children's Services (CCS) as an Occupational Therapist I at the Long Beach Medical Therapy Unit. She graduated from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo with a BS in Psychology and from USC with a MA in Occupational Therapy. Ms. Charmack is a member of the CCS committee that developed the protocol for CIMT and is one of the therapists that



**Allison Chu, MA, OTR/L**, received her Bachelor and Master degrees in Occupational Therapy from the University of Southern California (USC). Upon graduation, she worked for Pediatric Therapy Network and specialized in sensory integration and school-based occupational therapy. Wanting to expand her repertoire of skills, she transitioned to Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center where she has worked with a variety of clients across the entire continuum of care, specializing in those recovering from neurological injuries such as stroke. Ms. Chu is currently pursuing her OTD degree at USC and focusing her doctoral studies on designing an outpatient program to promote health, wellness, and lifestyle balance for female stroke survivors.



**Jim Dennis** has collected experiences for the past 12 years in the home health field that will be of great interest to occupational therapy practitioners who wish to enter this area of practice. His presentations are humorous, personable and practical and will empower the attendee to begin a successful career in home care. On a personal note, he loves the guitar and produced his solo instrumental album called "10 fingers 6 strings." Mr. Dennis is also the author of "Wellness For~Every~One: How to Create Optimal Health, Happiness and Longevity for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." He is married with two daughters.



**Lisa Dittbenner, OTR/L**, received a Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy from San José State University. She has worked for California Children's Services (CCS), Medical Therapy Program of Los Angeles County since 1987. For the past 11 years, Ms. Dittbenner has been an Occupational Therapy Instructor for CCS. She develops and provides training and consultation to staff, families, and students on a variety of topics including cerebral palsy, feeding, activities of daily living, and assistive technology/durable medical equipment. Ms. Dittbenner received training in constraint-induced movement therapy (CIMT) from the University of Alabama and chaired the committee that developed a CIMT protocol and staff training at CCS.



**Bryant Edwards, OTD, OTR/L, MPH**, currently works as an occupational therapist with the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District, as well as in the private sector. Dr. Edwards' focus within the school setting is with the preschool population, but works throughout the district, assessing and providing services for students who need occupational therapy to access and succeed in their educational program. Dr. Edwards utilizes the experience from his doctoral work to focus on methods to improve occupational engagement for students; and to educate parents and professionals on the role of occupational therapy within the school system.



**Ipuniuese Eliapo** is currently a master of occupational therapy student at Loma Linda University and has an Associate's degree in science. As an occupational therapy assistant, Ms. Eliapo has worked in public health serving children with special needs in American Samoa for the past 10 years.



**Stephanie Feuer, OTR/L**, completed her Bachelor's degree in Occupational Therapy at the University of Southern California (USC) in 1999. She has been providing occupational therapy services to at-risk youth in Los Angeles County for the past 11 years at Occupational Therapy Training Program (OTTP). Ms. Feuer was instrumental in expanding the target population at OTTP to include children age 5-13 as they had originally served only teens. She also serves as the Elementary Services Coordinator, Training Coordinator, and has been a clinical instructor for numerous OT students. In 2006, Ms. Feuer implemented a tennis program at OTTP to help address occupational deprivation issues among the clients residing in South Los Angeles.



**Don Gordon, PhD, OTR/L**, graduated from the University of Southern California (USC) with a MA in occupational therapy in 1994 and completed his doctoral studies in occupational science in 2002. During his professional career he has worked in both physical disabilities and psychiatric settings providing a unique experiential background to understand the intersection of the world of mental health with physical disabilities practice. Dr. Gordon has also taught numerous classes for USC's Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy. He currently is the primary occupational therapist for the inpatient psychiatry unit at USC University Hospital and covering patients in the acute medical service as needed.



**Amy Hedgecock** is currently completing her graduate degree in Occupational Therapy at Loma Linda University (LLU). A transfer student from Abilene Christian University, Ms. Hedgecock entered the Master's program at LLU in the fall of 2008 and recently completed fieldwork at Oceanside Unified School District, California Children's Services, a skilled nursing facility, and the Alternatives to the Domestic Violence Shelter.



**Jengliang Eric Hwang, PhD, OTR/L**, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Occupational Therapy at California State University, Dominguez Hills. He earned both his post-professional master's of occupational therapy degree in Early Intervention/School-Based Practice and doctoral degree in Rehabilitation Sciences from State University of New York at Buffalo. Dr. Hwang's current clinical practice has focused on services to older adults in community settings.

His research interest includes population health promotion strategies and development/validation of occupational therapy clinical assessments. His recently developed instrument, the Health Enhancement Lifestyle Profile (HELP), has been considered a valuable assessment tool for use in geriatric occupational therapy. Three HELP studies will soon be published in AJOT, OTJR, and Physical & Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics.



**Suchitra Iyer, MA, OTR/L**, is currently employed with Lake Forest Nursing Center, a leading provider of elderly care operated by Life Care Centers of America. Her compassion for the elderly and passion for occupational therapy led her to develop the 'Catching the Falls' program for the facility. Ms. Iyer graduated with a Master's degree in Occupational Therapy from University of Southern California (USC) in 2007 after having completed her Bachelor's degree in Occupational

Therapy from India in 2004. She has had the opportunity to work as a therapist in diverse cultures but maintains that the essence of occupation remains the same in any part of the world.



**Heather Javaherian, OTD, OTR/L** has been practicing occupational therapy for over 10 years. In 2004 she received her doctorate in occupational therapy with a focus in domestic violence from Creighton University. Dr. Javaherian is currently an Associate Professor and Program Director of the online Doctor of Occupational Therapy Program at Loma Linda University. Her teaching emphasis involves

research, evidence-based practice, program development, disability, and education. She specifically supervises Level I and Level II fieldwork students at a domestic violence shelter and oversees various program development projects in domestic violence agencies targeting programming for children, youth, and adults.



**Kelly Khun, OTR/L**, is an Occupational Therapy Instructor for California Children's Services (CCS), Medical Therapy Program, Los Angeles County. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Occupational Therapy from the University of Southern California (USC). Prior to coming to CCS in 2000, she practiced in an adult rehabilitation setting. As her current position, Mrs. Khun has many opportunities to educate and work collaboratively with patients, families, staff, students, and other professionals on various

occupational therapy related topics. She participated in the Constraint-Induced Movement Therapy (CIMT) Committee that developed the CIMT protocol and trained staff to implement the program in CCS.

**Hilda Kim, OTR/L**, works at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center's (LBMMC) community-based adult day program called Transitional Rehab Services (TRS). She began working at Long Beach Memorial in acute rehab in 2005, primarily working with clients with neurological deficits. Mrs. Kim "transitioned" into a position at TRS in 2008 to continue her work with clients with brain injury and stroke. Recently, she has been involved with establishing a driving program at LBMMC and is involved with on-going work related to driving and community mobility. Mrs. Kim is married to an occupational therapist, Roger, whom she met at Long Beach Memorial, and they are expecting their first child in July.



**Janelle Kurtenbach, MA, OTD, OTR/L**, currently provides community-based mental health occupational therapy services to at-risk youth in the Los Angeles area. At Occupational Therapy Training Project (OTTP), Dr. Kurtenbach is applying a Lifestyle Redesign intervention with young parents through a grant funded by the U.S. Department of Labor. She co-facilitates a tennis program to address occupational deprivation issues for young clients residing in South Los Angeles. In 2008, she completed her OTD at the University of Southern California, developing and implementing an occupational therapy program for women at a domestic violence transitional shelter in Hollywood. Dr. Kurtenbach previously has nine years experience as a high school counselor, having counseled students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds in the California school system.

**Robin Ogawa, OTR/L**, information not available.



**Steven Oliver** graduated from East Carolina University in 2004 with a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts. His professional background has given him experience assisting adults with intellectual disabilities with job placement and retention, as well as independent living. Mr. Oliver is currently a second-year, master's degree student in occupational therapy at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) where he is a Pi Theta Epsilon honor society member and serves as the AOTA Assembly of Student Delegates representative. He is also the OTAC Student Delegate for CSUDH. His practice areas of interest include hand therapy and physical disabilities, especially spinal cord injury.

**Kent Peppard, PhD**, information not available.



**Terry Peralta-Catipon, PhD, OTR/L**, received a Master of Arts degree in Occupational Therapy and a doctoral degree in Occupational Science at the University of Southern California (USC). She also holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology from the University of the Philippines. Dr. Peralta-Catipon is currently an assistant professor in the Occupational Therapy Department at California State University Dominguez Hills where she teaches basic science courses as well as occupational science theory. As a practitioner, she has been involved in adult rehabilitation and community-based program development for the mentally-ill and geriatric populations for the past 12 years.



**Barb Phillips, MS, OTR/L**, has been practicing as an occupational therapist for over 20 years. The majority of her work has been in the area of rehabilitation for individuals with physical disabilities. For 15 years, Ms. Phillips worked at the Center for Applied Rehabilitation Technology at Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center, in Downey, CA. While there, she began learning about ergonomics and went on to develop the ergonomic program at the City of Los Angeles, where she currently works. Ms. Phillips has her own business performing ergonomic assessments and providing training to private industry. She is also teaching the Assistive Technology class in the University of Southern California's Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy.



**April Quinn** began her undergraduate studies in the field of kinesiology from California State University, Long Beach. Her experience volunteering at Pediatric Therapy Network in Torrance sparked her fascination with sensory integration and neurology. Ms. Quinn is currently attending the master's degree program in occupational therapy at California State University, Dominguez Hills, where she distinguishes herself as a member of the occupational therapy honor society, Phi Theta Epsilon.



**Samia H. Rafeedie, OTD, OTR/L**, is currently teaching in the Division of Occupational Science & Occupational Therapy at the University of Southern California. She is responsible for three courses in the first year of the program with a focus on occupational therapy theory and practice in adult physical disabilities, senior practice, and kinesiology. Dr. Rafeedie also works at Good Samaritan Hospital where she treats primarily older adults in an

acute rehabilitation and subacute setting. She continues to grow her interest in higher education & occupational science and looks forward to experimenting with media and technology to enhance adult learning experiences.



**Debbie Ricker, OTR/L** graduated from Loma Linda University in 1978; and worked in various psychiatric and geriatric settings for 20 years. For the past 12 years she has specialized in working with individuals who have dementia. Ms. Ricker is a Certified Dementia Practitioner from the National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners; and owns a private practice where she provides consultation to dementia care programs, as well as, home safety assessments, functional assessments, and driving assessments to individuals. Her goal for individuals being assessed for driving is to keep them driving as long as they can drive safely. Ms. Ricker is dedicated to providing community awareness and education of keeping the brain healthy as one ages, and training medical professionals on all aspects of dementia.



**Bill Roberts, OTR/L**, graduated from the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio in 2000 with a bachelor's degree in occupational therapy. He then moved to southern California to begin his career at Pediatric Therapy Network in Torrance, CA. In 2003, Mr. Roberts began working as an occupational therapist at Long Beach Unified School District. He has discovered a passion for teaching social skills to students with social learning deficits from preschool through high school age. He has provided professional development courses on social skill development and intervention to teachers and other professionals in the district. Mr. Roberts has recently launched Social Climbers, a practice dedicated to empowering children, families, and educators through play, social skills intervention, training, and consultation.



**Adam F. Sanchez, OTR/L** is a graduate of York College, The City University of New York. He worked as a Senior Occupational Therapist at Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx NY, specializing in acute therapy and rehab and outpatient services. Currently Mr. Sanchez is employed at Long Beach Memorial Medical Center (LBMMC) in the Outpatient Neurological Service Department and participates on various committees, including the Stroke Resources Team, Spinal Cord Injury Patient Education Resource Group and the Gall-up committee. In 2009, (LBMMC) was honored to receive a grant from the AOTA to develop a community based network to address transportation needs of the elderly adult population. Mr. Sanchez served as the event coordinator for the first Car-Fit event in October 2009; another event is scheduled in May 2010.



**Brianne Switzenberg** began her undergraduate studies in the field of Visual Merchandising from The Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising. After re-evaluating her chosen career, Ms. Switzenberg returned to school and in 2006 graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her interest in teaching and helping others led her to the career of occupational therapy. Ms. Switzenberg is currently a second-year master's degree student in occupational therapy at California State University, Dominguez Hills where she expects to graduate in 2011. Her interests lie within neurology and include spinal cord injury and traumatic brain injury.



**Hadley Vargas** began her professional career as an elementary school teacher for Los Angeles Unified School District after receiving her undergraduate degree from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her interest in improving lives led her to the field of occupational therapy and to the master's degree program in occupational therapy at California State University, Dominguez Hills where she expects to graduate in 2011. Thus far, as an occupational therapy student, Ms. Vargas has assisted hand therapists, worked with children with physical disabilities, and helped adolescents that are at-risk in the field of mental health. Her interests include at-risk adolescents and adults with physical disabilities.



**Ellen (Len) Young, PhD, RCTC**, information not available.