When Tracy Chippendale, PhD, was planning her dissertation at New York University’s occupational therapy doctoral program, she knew she wanted to focus on the mental health of older adults—an often-neglected aspect of “aging in place.” She also knew, anecdotally, that writing or telling personal stories was a fulfilling activity for older clients or those in palliative care. “I had worked with many individuals and their families who were powerfully affected by sharing their life experience. I wanted to look systematically at whether this type of autobiographical storytelling could benefit older adults in terms of mental health and life satisfaction,” she says.

The result: An ambitious randomized control trial intervention study titled The effects of life review through writing on depressive symptoms and life satisfaction in older adults. Chippendale, Tufts’ newest full-time, tenure-track faculty member, conducted an eight-week writing workshop for residents in four New York-area assisted living facilities. Leading participants through writing exercises and group discussions, she helped them create written life reviews and then measured their depressive symptoms using the geriatric depression scale (GDS). The numbers supported Chippendale’s past experience: There was a statistically significant decrease in the depressive symptoms of clients who participated as compared to a control group. In addition to the quantitative data, Chippendale says that “the informal feedback I got from participants really spoke to how much this process helped them. They shared that it was ‘good for the mind and soul,’ and they really enjoyed coming each week.”

Although not surprised by her results, Chippendale feels it’s critically important for occupational therapists to conduct intervention research. “We must be able to demonstrate to the world that the techniques we use are effective and build our body of knowledge by demonstrating that these therapies make a measurable difference in clients’ lives.”

Chippendale hopes her Tufts students will be as excited about research as she is. As an assistant professor, she teaches courses in clinical reasoning, health and community systems, and occupation and adaptation in the adult years. She also plans to continue her “aging in place” research and to collaborate with colleagues in other professions and disciplines in the School of Arts and Sciences at Tufts. Regardless of where her research and teaching lead, Chippendale brings a well-honed interdisciplinary focus to her work—a perspective she feels is becoming increasingly important in the occupational therapy field.

Working with clients at the other end of the life span, lecturer Peggy Morris, OTD, OTR/L (’11), a pediatric occupational therapist, brings her own interdisciplinary perspective and decades of real-world experience to the course occupational therapy practice in pediatrics, which she is teaching for the first time this fall. A “newly minted” Tufts OTD, Morris says the doctoral program’s interdisciplinary approach has been invaluable to her thinking as a school-based occupational therapist.
A message from the chair

The new school year always ushers in a sense of excitement and change: The leaves are turning, new students are arriving, and there’s a new semester of learning ahead of us. At the Department of Occupational Therapy, we are celebrating many “beginnings” this year—from the addition of new faculty members (whom you’ll read about in this issue) to a new name and look for BSOT Notes.

While the titles BSOT and BSOT Notes have a long history at Tufts, we as a department are part of the University’s renowned Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS). Our newly coined newsletter News & Notes—and a new look that conforms more closely to Tufts’ other publications—reflects our position within the dynamic, rich environment of GSAS while also acknowledging our treasured past.

Other changes this year include the hiring of Assistant Professor Tracy Chippendale, who brings a powerful interdisciplinary approach to her teaching and scholarship in aging and community service models of occupational therapy. In fact, the interdisciplinary nature of occupational therapy research and practice is fast becoming the field’s approach of the future—and is central to our mission. The collaborative and synergistic nature of interdisciplinary work allows each discipline to integrate its body of knowledge and expertise. The interdisciplinary process allows for synthesis of ideas and approaches to produce best possible outcomes.

An interdisciplinary perspective has also become core to the mission of Tufts University as a whole. New members of our administration, including President Anthony P. Monaco, MD, PhD, and Dean Joanne Berger-Sweeney, MPH, PhD, believe strongly in the notion that academics can no longer be siloed in one discipline or another; the problems they are seeking to address simply cannot be solved by one discipline alone.

An approach to scholarship and teaching that crosses disciplines strengthens resources and removes barriers. At Tufts, we are ideally positioned to educate our students to challenge the current ways of thinking and to effect change. So as the leaves start to turn on the Hill and we welcome the many new faces, I look forward to the changes ahead.

Linda Tickle-Degnen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA
Professor and Chair

HQLL UPDATE: Students and faculty carry on interdisciplinary research

Students in the Health Quality of Life Laboratory (HQLL), under the direction of Linda Tickle-Degnen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, have continued disseminating their interdisciplinary research, primarily in the area of Parkinson’s disease.

Student Sarah Porter (’12), along with Nancy Mazonson, MS, OTR/L, director of the Parkinson’s Family Support at Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Greater Boston, and Tickle-Degnen, published an article about their work running groups for men with Parkinson’s disease in the August 22, 2011 issue of OT Practice. The article, Supporting social participation in individuals with Parkinson’s disease: A story of the Parkinson’s men’s group, continues the group work and program development of former Tufts students Twyla Fink, MS, OTR/L (’09) and Lisa Ryan, MS, OTR/L (’10), related to promoting psychosocial quality of life among men who participate in Parkinson’s-related social groups.

Tufts psychology PhD candidate Kathleen Bogart also brought her psychology and disability perspective to HQLL with an analysis of the current state of research on apathy in Parkinson’s disease. Her article, published in the July 2011 issue of Health Psychology, provided explanations for why it is difficult to assess apathy in patients with Parkinson’s.

Tickle-Degnen collaborated with researchers Leslie Zebrowitz, PhD, professor of psychology at Brandeis University, and Hui-ing Ma, ScD, professor of occupational therapy at the National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan, on the study Culture, gender, and health care stigma: Practitioners’ response to facial masking experienced by people with Parkinson’s disease. The study, published in Social Science & Medicine, examined the effect of facial masking, culture, and gender on practitioners’ impressions of Parkinson’s patients’ psychological attributes. This research was also featured on NPR’s health blog, Shots (www.npr.org/blogs/health).

Disciplines, continued from page 1

Over her 30-year career, Morris had become increasingly interested in collaborative consultation—a service model involving cooperative or team teaching characterized by partnerships among special and general educators. The hallmark of collaborative consultation is shared thinking and mutual decision-making in fostering a child’s success in school. “In collaborative consulting, everyone on a child’s team—the teacher, occupational therapist, physical therapist, speech/language therapist—brings different strengths, but each of us is equal in our ability. It’s an interdisciplinary model based on mutual respect for each other’s areas of expertise,” Morris says.

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Carmen Gutierrez

When student Carmen Gutierrez (‘12) was awarded a Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service fellowship this past summer, she expected to help teachers in the Somerville, Massachusetts, public schools with curriculum development and program planning. But as she and her supervisor began to develop the role she would play in the Summer Program for English Language Learners (SPELL) at the Argenziano School, Gutierrez quickly found herself putting her occupational therapy lens to work. Meeting individually and in small groups with at-risk English language learners (ELL), Gutierrez helped engage students in the summer program, which is designed to improve academic success for emerging English speakers. "I created suggestions for approaches to use with the students and got to interact with them directly, as well as facilitate their learning with teachers in the classroom. It was an amazing experience," she says.

Gutierrez’s fellowship was part of Project PERIS (Partnering for Economic Recovery Impact through Service), a Tisch College initiative that engages community partners, faculty, and university and high school students in a collaborative planning process that delivers needed services for economic recovery. According to Gutierrez, the SPELL program addresses the needs of the many ELL students in the diverse, multicultural community of Somerville. “Some of these students are at risk of joining gangs and performing poorly in school, in part because of language and cultural barriers. My job was to identify needs, provide emotional support, and help with functional tasks so that the students could perform better in school and improve their engagement and interest in school as much as possible,” she explains.

Gutierrez’s occupational therapy perspective came in handy as she implemented goal-setting, journaling, and self-reflective activities to help students plan for academic success. She engaged struggling readers in games and classroom activities and assisted Spanish-speaking students in using their English skills to problem-solve.

For Gutierrez, one of the best parts of the fellowship was being able to observe and work with the children and teachers directly in the classroom. Her occupational therapy training showed her the importance of having an interdisciplinary mindset when helping students at risk. “Most schools simply don’t have the resources to provide this kind of support,” she says. "For students at risk, the functional emphasis of occupational therapy provides a perfect framework, and therapists can help empower students with the skills necessary to be successful in school.”

Disciplines, continued from page 2

In an effort to draw a clearer picture of what this relatively new service model looks like in practice, Morris’ OTD leadership project, School-based collaborative consultation practices: Perspectives of collaborating occupational therapist and classroom teacher dyads, examined the perspectives of 12 teacher/occupational therapist dyads in several Massachusetts public schools. Online diaries provided valuable answers about team members’ collaborative consulting experiences.

Morris found that “collaborative consultation is still a developing trend. Service providers understand the theory behind it, but are still transitioning into putting the concept into practice." Morris believes this model of service delivery has many benefits, and she would like to see it expanded through professional development. “Traditionally, each provider would work with the child outside the classroom, independent of the teacher. But in collaborative consultation, we are working in the classroom, together. That not only makes us more accessible to one another, but also allows us to provide contextual services—services that support the student’s ability to participate in the normal routines of school in typical places such as the cafeteria and playground. This, in turn, fosters better outcomes."
Miya Asato Helps Pioneer Pediatric Subspecialty

Pediatric neurologist Miya Asato, MD (’87), is blazing a new trail in pediatrics as director of Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh’s neurodevelopmental disabilities (NDD) residency program. NDD is a new subspecialty that incorporates a multidisciplinary, holistic approach to diagnosing and treating children with developmental disabilities, metabolic and genetic disorders, cerebral palsy, autism, and other central nervous system disorders. According to Asato, “the NDD specialty encourages collaboration among doctors, educators, therapists, and the community to help children with lifelong conditions become more independent across their life spans. I am grateful for my occupational therapy training in this work.”

Entering Tufts as a premed student, Asato switched to the then-undergraduate occupational therapy program in her junior year. After practicing occupational therapy in adult rehabilitation for a few years, she found her way back to medicine, graduating from Jefferson Medical College in Philadelphia in 1995. As a pediatric neurologist in Pittsburgh, Asato sees patients, trains NDD residents, and conducts research on the cognitive and behavioral issues associated with childhood epilepsy.

“Children with epilepsy often have comorbid problems such as depression, anxiety, ADHD, and cognitive dysfunction that can affect their day-to-day function,” Asato says. “And if you follow some patients long term, despite the fact that many grow out their seizures, some experience compromised academic, vocational, and social outcomes, indicating a long-lasting effect of a childhood brain disease.”

Asato hopes her research can shed light on what happens to the brain when seizures occur in childhood and how that might impact brain development. She is using cutting-edge MRI technology and cognitive assessments to study executive function and distractibility among children with epilepsy. Like others in her field, she is looking for evidence that the disease is a neuro-psychiatric syndrome “in which the brain is different, and seizures are just one symptom of this difference. If we can understand brain development in the context of epilepsy—and the social and academic issues associated with it—we might be able to improve children’s long term prognosis.”

Asato points out that the impact of epilepsy and other neurodevelopmental disorders on families is often great, whether it be children’s concerns about taking medication in school or the effect the disorders have on siblings. “Helping families face the challenges of these chronic childhood diseases requires a holistic perspective. That’s where my ‘OT’ lens comes in,” she says.

Heather Beland Puts Her Creativity to Work

Heather (Edgar) Beland, MS, OTR/L (’02), recently added “published author” to her long list of accomplishments since graduating from Tufts. An acute care specialist, Beland coauthored a chapter in Stroke Rehabilitation: A Function-Based Approach, 3rd Edition by Glen Gillen, EdD, OTR, FAOTA, published in September 2010. Considered the leading stroke rehabilitation resource for occupational therapists, Gillen’s text is used widely among students and practitioners nationwide. The book’s first chapter, titled “Pathophysiology, Medical Management, and Acute Rehabilitation of Stroke Survivors,” was coauthored by Matthew Bartels, Catherine Duffy, and Beland; Beland’s section focuses on functional acute care in medically complex patients.

Beland worked with Gillen from 2002–2009 when she was an acute care advanced clinician at New York-Presbyterian Hospital (NYPH). There she treated patients with neurological, surgical, orthopedic, and other diagnoses, specializing in cardiac intensive care. Beland also trained and supervised occupational therapy staff at NYPH, and lectured extensively in the occupational therapy program at SUNY Down State Medical Center in New York. After her first child was born, Beland left NYPH to become a part-time staff therapist at Englewood Hospital and Medical Center in New Jersey.

At Englewood, Beland is using her extensive knowledge in acute care treating breast cancer patients in both post-mastectomy inpatient settings and in outpatient lymphedema treatment; lymphedema, a condition that causes localized fluid retention and tissue swelling, is a common side effect in breast cancer patients. “I always wanted to work in a ‘helping profession,’” and OT has given me a wide range of options. My work with breast cancer patients is very creative and builds off the other acute care I have done,” Beland says.

As for being asked by Gillen to contribute to his book, Beland is deeply honored. “Glen is a master at what he does. I used his text when I was at Tufts, and I still refer to it to this day.”
Occupational therapist Julie Ann Nastasi, OTD, OTR/L, SCLV (’02), sees hope for people with low vision. One of only 21 people in the nation with a specialty certification in low vision (SCLV) from the American Occupational Therapy Association, Nastasi is developing low vision rehabilitation services at the University of Scranton’s health clinic for the uninsured. The Leahy Community Health and Family Center offers free medical services to patients in the Scranton area, but until hiring Nastasi this fall, did not provide occupational therapy services for people with low vision. “With the population growing older, age-related vision problems have become a big issue,” Nastasi says. “At our clinic, we evaluate the impact of a vision deficit on what a client can or wants to do and help him or her achieve those goals.”

When it comes to enhancing the lives of people with low vision, Nastasi is often considered a “vision guru.” During her clinical doctorate (OTD) training at Boston University, she completed a dissertation on Specialty level II fieldwork in low vision rehabilitation, developing a best practices model in order to encourage occupational therapists to pursue specialties in low vision rehabilitation. “In my research, I found that there are many more adults with low vision who need OT services than there are trained therapists. I hope this fieldwork model will provide greater access to this specialty for the clients who need it,” Nastasi says. She has also received significant acclaim in the field, including being recognized in June 2009, by OT Practice as a “Practitioner in the News” and being honored as a 2009 Delta Gamma Fellow by the American Federation of the Blind’s Josephine L. Taylor Leadership Institute.

Before joining the University of Scranton faculty, Nastasi was fieldwork coordinator for the occupational therapy assistant program at Mercy College (Dobbs Ferry, N.Y.) and then served as faculty at the occupational therapy program at Ithaca College. An active member of the New York State Occupational Therapy Association (NYSOTA), she helped draft a motion—ultimately passed by the U.S. government in 2008—that mandated increased print size on all U.S. currency. Another bill Nastasi helped write—just recently passed—permits New York-licensed optometrists to refer patients to occupational therapists.

Nastasi is passionate about her role as a low vision specialist and advocate. “Low vision is sometimes called a ‘blind deficit’ because others can’t always see that you have a visual disability. Yet, poor vision can affect everything you do—your ability to work, drive, read, and participate in leisure and social activities. In working with clients and training others in this specialty, I hope to empower people to remain independent and live life to the fullest.”

Catching up with:

Sharan Schwartzberg

Former chair of the Department of Occupational Therapy Sharan L. Schwartzberg, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA, has been commuting a great deal between Medford and Boston this year. As part of a unique interdisciplinary team, Schwartzberg is conducting research at the inpatient psychiatric unit of Tufts Medical Center (TMC), exploring ways to help those with psychiatric illness develop better oral health. According to Schwartzberg, psychiatric patients often have poor oral health because of dental phobias, limited access to dental care, and side effects caused by psychiatric medications. “Good oral health affects the ability to eat a healthy diet, socially participate, and communicate. It’s an essential component of health that contributes to quality of living; yet good oral health in psychiatric patients is often overlooked,” she says.

Schwartzberg is working with Hilde Tillman, DMD, professor of dentistry at the Tufts School of Dental Medicine; TMC occupational therapist Ellen White, MS, OTR/L; third-year dental students Gregory Lane and Emery Sweeney; and occupational therapy student Shawna Hollebone. Together, this interdisciplinary team is applying its knowledge of dental medicine, psychiatry, and occupational therapy, as well as the Functional Group Model (FGM) developed by Schwartzberg, Howe, and Barnes (2008), to create a manual that can be used in group therapy sessions to address patients’ dental health. The team is currently collecting data on the patients’ perceptions of their oral health using the Oral Health Inventory Profile (OHIP) (Slade & Spencer, 1994) and will soon analyze trends in the respondent group. A long-term goal of the research is to discern the intervention needs of the group as well as develop a model for interdisciplinary and interschool graduate education.

“Dental students know a great deal about oral health, and occupational therapists know about group work and self care. With this research, we are merging our specialties.”

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Accolades

In April, Jumbos from the Department of Occupational Therapy made an outstanding showing at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) annual conference in Philadelphia—receiving recognition via both presentations and awards. Faculty members, graduate students, and alumni presented, including the following:

**Faculty & students**
- Gary Bedell, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, with colleagues Wendy Coster, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, and contributing authors Mary Law, PhD, OT Reg, (ON, FCAOT, FCAHS) and Rachel Teplicky, MSc, BHSc (OT), presented a poster on The participation and environment measure for children and youth: Descriptive and psychometric findings.
- Linda Tickle-Degnen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, with contributing author psychology graduate student Kathleen Bogart, MA, and students Joan Bero, Sara Eisler, Roni Herbst, Kelli Kranek, and Julissa Taveras presented a poster on Gender differences in values of roles through adulthood. This research was also presented at the Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy (MAOT) annual conference last fall.
- Linda Tickle-Degnen, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, with students Kristina Carlini, Teresa Czepiel, Tiffany Sewell, and Charmie Dave presented a poster on Gender differences in older adult role participation.

**Alumni**
- Moya Kinnealey, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, presented a poster on Listening to the voice of autism: An adult intervention model.
- Julie Ann Nastasi, OTD, OTR/L, SCLV, presented a poster on Developing best-practice models for fieldwork education in emerging practice areas.
- Jan Hollenbeck, OTD, OTR/L, presented a workshop on School-based practice: Empowerment through effective documentation; she also led a workshop titled Considering assistive technology for written output in the schools.
- Diana Henry, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA, presented a workshop on Stepping beyond assessments: Linking sensory integration, the sensory processing measures, and a Quick Tips® school team empowerment approach.
- Deane Bronfenbrenner McCraith represented Allen Cognitive Model products at the exhibitors’ tables.
- Midge Hobbs, MA, OTR/L, presented a workshop on AOTA leadership: We all have a role.
- Ann O’Sullivan, OTR/L, LSW, presented a workshop on Successful partnerships with family caregivers in home care.
- Regina Doherty, OTD, OTR/L, presented a poster on We need to talk: Cultivating academic integrity in learning communities.

**Award recipients**
- Faculty member Jane Koomar, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA, won the American Occupational Therapy Foundation’s prestigious A. Jean Ayres Award, which annually recognizes clinicians, educators, and researchers who have demonstrated sustained commitment to the field.
- Student Svea Van Langenhoven was awarded a North Coast Medical Scholarship granted by the American Occupational Therapy Foundation (AOTF).
Congratulations to all of the AOTA presenters and award recipients!

Congratulations also go out to our students and alumni who have earned other scholarships and awards.

- Alumna Elizabeth Griffin Lannigan, PhD, OTR/L, received AOTA’s Recognition of Achievement Award for her leadership in mental health and disability advocacy.

- Michelle Marques earned the department’s Marjorie B. Greene Award, which is awarded to an occupational therapy student who has demonstrated outstanding achievement in leadership and involvement in student and professional activities.

- Alexia Fiorini won a Karen Jacobs Scholarship by the Massachusetts Association for Occupational Therapy (MAOT).

- Neal Drew was awarded the Joy Ann Greisen Scholarship, an award that supports students who have excelled academically and distinguished themselves as leaders.

- Kristina Carlini, Teresa Czepiel, Tiffany Sewell, and Charmie Dave won the Tufts Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) Best Poster Award for Gender differences in older adult role participation.

- Alumna Anadee Nikte (’10) received an award for Best Occupational Therapist from her employer Hallmark Rehabilitation, an interdisciplinary rehabilitation services agency. This award goes to an occupational therapist who exhibits best practice and clinical skills related to evidence-based patient care, creativity, and documentation.

Throughout the 2011 spring semester, faculty and students were also busy presenting at area conferences and sharing their work within Tufts.

Faculty & students
- Mary Alicia Barnes, OTR/L, and Sharan Schwartzberg, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA, presented The looking glass or a house of mirrors? Exploring action and resistance in the group at the Northeastern Society for Group Psychotherapy’s annual regional conference in Boston in June.

- Michael Roberts, MS, OTR/L, with students Alexia Fiorini, Carmen Gutierrez, Roxanna Gonzalez, and Caitlin Turner presented a poster on Presence and engagement in Wii-habilitation at the Rhode Island Occupational Therapy Association annual conference in Warwick, Rhode Island in May.

Masters student theses
- Teresa Czepiel on The caregiving experience of wives of veterans with combat-related trauma and dementia.

- Wei-Chang Chen on Environmental barriers affecting participation of children and youth with acquired brain injuries.

Occupational therapy doctorate (OTD) leadership projects
- Ashley Blackington, MS, OTR/L, on Blast-related traumatic brain injury complications: Implications for community re-integration of returning Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom veterans.

- Margaret Morris, MS, OTR/L, on School-based collaborative consultation practices: Perspectives of collaborating occupational therapy and classroom teacher dyads.

Kudos to all of our faculty, students, and alumni who engage in meaningful occupational therapy scholarship and expand our field’s knowledge base every day!

In Other News
Second-year student Neal Drew spent his summer coordinating the Community Based Extended Year Program, an Extended School Year (ESY) service offered by the Brookline Public Schools for adolescents with disabilities. This year, the program served 16 students with autism and other disabilities. Designed to build interpersonal learning and self-confidence, it offers children a rich schedule of life skills activities, recreational activities, adaptive outdoor experiences, educational field trips, and community service projects. “This is my third summer in the program, and once again, we had six weeks of fun!” Drew says.

Alumna Helen Osborne, MEd, OTR/L, (’70) has had great success as a health literacy expert and the founder and president of Health Literacy Consulting in Natick, Massachusetts. A psychiatric occupational therapist, Osborne is passionate about making a difference in people’s lives through health literacy—helping organizations communicate health information in ways that patients, families, and employees can understand. She produces and hosts the podcast series Health Literacy Out Loud and is the founder of Health Literacy Month—a campaign that raises awareness about the importance of understandable health information. The second addition of her award-winning book, Health Literacy from A to Z: Practical Ways to Communicate Your Health Message, is scheduled for publication this November. For more information, visit www.healthliteracy.com.
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areas of expertise, creating a group model we can ‘manualize’ to give the dental students a template with which to work,” Schwartzberg says. Her role involves designing the research project, facilitating the team’s efforts in research and group implementation, and offering an occupational therapy perspective on the challenges of maintaining good oral health in this patient population.

“Collaborative care that includes dentistry, occupational therapy, and psychiatry will improve services to individuals with severe mental illness because an integrated program addresses the biological, social, and psychological aspects of oral health,” she says. “This project is an excellent example of the integration of interdisciplinary practice and research. It’s very exciting!”

Following her interdisciplinary interests, Schwartzberg is an elected board member (2010–2014 term) of the American Group Psychotherapy Association in addition to being a professor in the GSAS Department of Occupational Therapy and an adjunct professor of psychiatry at the Tufts School of Medicine. She is also coordinator of the doctor of occupational therapy program (OTD) at Tufts and adviser to the department’s certificate programs, which include the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences’ hand and upper extremity rehabilitation certificate and the School of Medicine’s pain research, education, and policy certificate.