

Sylvia Birkhead – Curriculum Vitae

Qualified as an Occupational Therapist from Wits University (BSc OT Hons) in 1983, and worked in a Provincial Hospital as head of Rehabilitation for 10 years.

Lectured part time at Wits University in the OT department from 2000 to 2009, and co-ordinated OT Assistant certificate training for 3 years. Examiner for HPCSA for OTT top-up exam. Taught and examined for Lifehealth Esidimeni OTA course and OTT Top-up course. Guest lecturer 5 times in the O.T department at the University of Mauritius in paediatrics, neurology, mental health (Intellectual impairment), sensory-based care, community-based care and geriatrics. Have run 10 days of workshops in the U.K for the South Essex NHS Trust, based on sensory input for varying functional levels of residents in institutions.

Facilitate Support groups, consult for and give presentations / workshops for the Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinsons, MND (motor neurone disease), Dystonia, Stroke Aid and Alzheimer's Associations.

Member of Alzheimer's SA Association Gauteng committee - do workshops, training and assessment of caregivers for ASA. Am a Trainer for Alzheimer's association. Have been trained by Flo Longhorn as sensory stimulation specialist in S.A. and do numerous presentations throughout S.A on sensory based activities and care. Do audits, training and consultation for several organisations in the field of geriatrics e.g. Trans50 organisation, Flower Foundation, Methodist Homes for the Aged, Queenshaven Foundation, GAFA, Rand Aid and others

Did Masters degree in Occupational Therapy at the University of Pretoria (M.OT) in 2003 on the needs of caregivers of stroke patients. Have written numerous articles (latest is an article on a creative programme in an old age home in SA which was accepted in the Third Age special edition of the OT International Journal in 2011), a chapter in an O.T text book (has been rewritten for 5th edition) and compiled a booklet on low cost O.T activities.

In 2004, won the OTASA Albie Sach's Award for making an exceptional contribution to the lives of people with disabilities in South Africa. Won OT of the Year in 1987, 2002 and 2012.

At present have a private practice treating children and adolescents with learning and study problems, do home visits to adults with neurological conditions, run activity groups at several old age homes, train and supervise OT Assistants and caregivers, and am an OT consultant for several organisations. I am involved in the OT Association of SA, as editor of the OTASA newsletter, as well as being a S.Gauteng branch committee member.

My areas of speciality are sensory and brain stimulation, creativity and neurological conditions such as dementia, strokes and Parkinsons

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