



## **PRACTICE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

### **December 8, 2023**

Committee Members Present

Christine Wietlisbach, OT, Board Member/Chair  
 Richard Bookwalter, OT, Board Member  
 Bob Candari, OT  
 Elizabeth Gomes, OT  
 Danielle Meglio, OTA  
 Jeannette Nakamura, OT  
 Carlin Daley Reaume, OT  
 Chi-Kwan Shea, OT  
 Floyd Tran, OT

Board Staff Present

Heather Martin, Executive Officer  
 Jody Quesada Novey, Manager

Committee Members Absent

Lynna Do, Board Member  
 Diane Laszlo, OT Retired

### **Friday, December 8, 2023**

#### **5:00 pm – Committee Meeting**

1. Call to order, roll call, establishment of a quorum.

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 pm, roll was called, and a quorum was established.

2. Chairperson opening remarks.

Chairperson Christine Wietlisbach welcomed and thanked all in attendance for their time and willingness to participate. She gave an overview of the need for a quorum with each meeting thus the outreach by Board staff to ensure attendance. She explained that without a quorum the meeting would have been canceled.

3. Introductions by all Committee Members.

All committee members present chose to introduce themselves and provide a quick overview of their expertise and area(s) of practice.

4. Public Comment for Items Not on the Agenda.

There were no public comments for items not on the agenda.

5. Review and vote on approval of the October 13, 2023, committee meeting minutes.

- Richard Bookwalter moved to approve the October 13, 2023, Practice Committee Meeting minutes as written and directed Board staff to make non-substantive changes.
- Danielle Meglio seconded the motion.

There were no additional Board member remarks.  
There were no public comments.

**Board Member Vote**

Christine Wietlisbach	Yes
Richard Bookwalter	Yes
Bob Candari	Yes
Elizabeth Gomes	Yes
Danielle Meglio	Yes
Jeannette Nakamura	Yes
Carlin Daley Reaume	Yes
Chi-Kwan Shea	Yes
Floyd Tran	Yes

The motion carried.

6. Consideration and possible recommendation to the Board on whether suture removal is within the occupational therapy scope of practice.

Chair Christine Wietlisbach referred to the provided documents that included an American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Position paper that specifically mentioned that an occupational therapist can perform suture removal and she drew the committee's attention to the direct correlation made between the article's reference to wounds and related conditions negatively affecting a person's ability to participate in their life roles and the occupational therapy profession's focus to assist a patient in the participation of their life roles. Ms. Wietlisbach also pointed to AOTA's 2021 Occupational Therapy Scope of Practice that refers to wound management as "Interventions and procedures to promote or enhance safety and performance in ADLs."

Richard Bookwalter noted that the AOTA references to suture removal were not new, suture removal was referenced in the 2013 document because AOTA had long been an advocate.

Ms. Wietlisbach pointed out the references made throughout the provided documents that state only practitioners that have the proper training and feel comfortable in their skills should ever perform any treatment.

Ms. Wietlisbach reported that she had performed suture removal because she had taken continuing education courses and felt comfortable performing this treatment.

Ms. Wietlisbach stated that if the committee decided to take a position of support that it is her opinion that it should include direction that stated suture removal should only be performed if the practitioner was competent.

Chi-Kwan Shea commented that a laundry list of services within the scope of practice for an occupational therapy practitioner is not needed because she felt that the position paper from AOTA was more definite than a committee recommendation.

Executive Officer Heather Martin cautioned that although AOTA provides position papers, it is up to each individual state to adopt language or not. AOTA's papers are very helpful but are not overarching. Ms. Martin encouraged the committee to steer away from establishing lists of services/treatments that an occupational therapy (OT) practitioner can perform.

Ms. Martin, Chair/Board Member Christine Wietlisbach and Committee/Board member Richard Bookwalter engaged in a robust conversation with the remaining committee members who sought guidance on the process and their contribution to the process.

The committee was given an overview of the public comment/practice inquiry process. The process begins with the Board assigning it to a relevant committee to vet and make a recommendation to the Board. The committee was informed that the Board could choose to not take a position at all or choose to not follow the recommendation of the committee. The committee was assured that at minimum their recommendation would prove invaluable to Board staff that receives many challenging phone calls and emails from practitioners and patients seeking clarification.

Ms. Martin stated that these inquiries usually arise from workplace settings and a contracted expert reviewer with the Board would be able to use all the available documents and recommendations to aid in rendering their opinion.

The committee continued discussing suture removal with a mention and subsequent discussion of staple(s) removal and whether that procedure falls in the same category and whether these removals could be performed in a home health setting. The consensus of the committee was that as long as the practitioner had the proper training for these procedures, and the removal follows the orders of a physician that these procedures can be performed by an occupational therapy practitioner in a home setting.

There was no disagreement from the committee members present.

- Richard Bookwalter moved to recommend to the Board that suture removal is a part of OT practice according to a review of documentation that regulates the OT practice.
- Carlin Daley Reaume seconded the motion.

There were no additional Board member remarks.  
There were no public comments.

**Board Member Vote**

Christine Wietlisbach	Yes
Richard Bookwalter	Yes

Bob Candari	Yes
Elizabeth Gomes	Yes
Danielle Meglio	Yes
Jeannette Nakamura	Yes
Carlin Daley Reaume	Yes
Chi-Kwan Shea	Yes
Floyd Tran	Yes

The motion carried.

Chair Christine Wietlisbach thanked the committee members and Executive Officer Heather Martin for an informative and thorough discussion.

**Due to time constraints Chair Wietlisbach informed the committee that agenda items seven, eight, nine and ten would be prioritized for the March 2024 meeting.**

Ms. Wietlisbach asked the committee to review the current hand and physical agent modalities language in the California Code of Regulations Article 6. Advanced Practices and Business and Professions Code sections 2570.2(m) and (n) prior to the next Practice committee meeting.

7. Consideration and possible recommendation to the Board on whether advanced practice approval in hand therapy is required to treat carpal tunnel syndrome, repetitive motion injuries, or finger/hand pain, wrist pain or elbow pain that is not due to injury or surgery.
8. Consideration and possible recommendation to the Board following a review of the ACOTE Guidelines to consider reducing or eliminating advanced practice education and training requirements for students graduating after a certain (TBD) date.
9. Consideration and possible recommendation to the Board on whether the education and training requirements for licensees demonstrating competence in the advanced practice areas should be reduced.
10. Committee discussion and prioritization of practice issues delegated by the Board to the Committee for evaluation and possible recommendation(s) to the Board.
11. New suggested agenda items for a future meeting.

There were no new items suggested.

12. Discussion on scheduling time(s) for future meetings.

Chair Wietlisbach informed the committee that although the Doodle poll for a March 2024 meeting was sent that it would be sent again in late February.

**Meeting adjournment** - The meeting adjourned at 6:32 p.m.