Interview with Neil Harvison interviewed by Rachel Caplan, OTS

Mr. Harvison was born in Australia. Growing up in a blue collar home, Mr. Harvison was the first person in his family to attend university. Mr. Harvison was always interested in the health profession field and decided to study occupational therapy. After receiving his bachelor’s degree from the University of Queensland in occupational therapy, he worked in a children’s specialized hospital in Brisbane, Australia. In Australia, Mr. Harvison served on a committee for a national conference for occupational therapy. Anne Mosey was a guest speaker at one of the conferences. While attending this conference, Mr. Harvison got the opportunity to speak with Anne Mosey. She convinced Mr. Harvison to move to the United States and pursue his master’s degree.

In 1987, Mr. Harvison moved to New York for a master’s degree program. He received his degree from the Steinhardt School of New York University in developmental disabilities. While receiving his degree, Mr. Harvison worked with developmentally disabled adults in an impoverished neighborhood of New York City. After receiving his master’s degree, Mr. Harvison got recruited by Mount Sinai in New York City. In the 1980s, two social issues were dominating healthcare. They were the cocaine epidemic and AIDS epidemic. Therefore, Mr. Harvison’s caseload consisted mostly of babies who were born to mothers that were cocaine addicts. Mr. Harvison also worked with patients that were dying from AIDS. His caseload was split between babies were born to mothers that were cocaine addicts and patients who were dying from AIDS in the Mapplethorpe Clinic. Although these caseloads sound depressing, Mr. Harvison recognized the positive attributes come out of working with occupations that come out of with end of life issues and challenges.

Mr. Harvison worked at both Mount Sinai and Beth Israel in New York City for the next 14 years. Additionally, Mr. Harvison became the hospital director at Mount Sinai. As hospital director Mr. Harivson was responsible for overseeing outpatient facilities and 250 clinicians.

When Mr. Harvison first practiced, he had more time with clients. The clients were also able to spend more time in inpatient care between outpatient services. Later on, the metric has become a business. Therefore, there is less time to spend with clients or patients. Today, there is a focus from quantity with the patient or client to the quality of time with the patient or client.

Anne Mosey was a big influence on Mr. Harvison’s career. Anne Mosey convinced Mr. Harvison to move to the United States. This opened many new opportunities to advance Mr. Harvison’s career. She also convinced Mr. Harvison to advance his education and receive both a master’s and doctoral degree.

Mr. Harvison completed his doctorate degree and was an adjunct instructor at Columbia University and Mount Sinai School of Medicine. After completing his doctorate degree, Mr. Harvison was recruited into a volunteer role with the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. He then served as the director of a community hospital system in Westchester New York. Mr. Harvison has served in numerous positions in the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) that include Director of Accreditation, Director of Accreditation of Academic Affairs, and Chief Officer of Academic Affairs and Scientific Affairs. Mr. Harvison currently serves as the Chief Professional Affairs Officer of the AOTA.