

## Case Study 2: Sara – Fatigue in the Private Practice Setting

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Increasing the fatigue-related occupational health and safety knowledge base of regulated occupational therapists in Alberta, Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists in partnership with Alberta Human Services, Occupational Health and Safety Program, Government of Alberta

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### 'Sara' Case Study – Private Practice



Following an error in a medical-legal report that resulted in the rejection of her recommendations by a judge, Sara decided to take a step back to examine her practice and her work processes. She had to admit to herself that she was exhausted and that the error would likely not have occurred if she had been feeling her best. She recognized being extremely fatigued, constantly worrying about having enough work to sustain herself and having reached a point where she was not enjoying her work and

having become complacent about her work.

Sara's colleague suggested she might want to check the resources and information on the Society of Alberta Occupational Therapists (SAOT) website – *Fatigue in the Occupational Therapists' Workplace* <http://www.otfatiguesaot.info/> to help her understand better why she was feeling overburdened and what strategies she might try.

Sara gained insights on what happened by using her skills of self-reflection and information from the website. In taking the time to analyze her error Sara conceded that it could have been avoided if she'd had more time to research the issue. She knew that, in the early days of her practice, this would not have happened. In examining what had changed she concluded that as she became more known in the industry referrals were coming in a faster, albeit unsteady, rate. Not wanting to refuse referrals, in case they stopped coming in, she was accepting far more than was realistically possible to handle, some of them with very tight deadlines. She felt that this resulted in less thorough research into her cases and hampered her own on-going professional development.

In the interest of her own well-being and ensuring consistently competent practice Sara:

- Established specific actions she would take to decrease her overhead costs if a 'slow' period occurred
- Analyzed the referral trend over the past 2 years and used the information to establish a quota for how many she would accept per month – and committed to sticking to it!
- Joined to local professional practice group and blocked out the days required to attend their education and mentoring events
- And finally – schedules a week-end away to the mountains with a friend she had been 'neglecting'.