



Occupational Therapy Expert Clinician, Leader, and Advocate

Dr. Luis Arabit has made significant contributions to the profession as an “occupational therapy expert clinician, leader, and advocate”. I am honored to nominate Dr. Luis Arabit for the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Roster of Fellows (FAOTA) award. Over the past 30 years, Luis has generously shared his extensive expertise with colleagues, students and others to move the profession forward. The FAOTA award recognizes occupational therapists who have “made a significant contribution to the profession by utilizing special skills and/or knowledge”. Luis has consistently worked to advance his practice skills. He then supports other OT practitioners by providing seminars and presentations on the role of the occupational therapy using various intervention methods. His advocacy and leadership efforts evolved by supporting the profession through elected and appointed positions at local, state and national levels.

As a lifelong learner, Dr. Arabit pursued additional educational opportunities to better serve his clients. His advanced certifications and degrees provide evidence of his dedication to advance his skills. He then used this knowledge to support other occupational therapy practitioners. Luis provided numerous and extensive workshops addressing the shoulder complex at national and international conferences. His dedication to advancing the profession is seen with his willingness to support and mentor other occupational therapy practitioners to use evidence-based interventions for clients with shoulder injuries.

Dr. Arabit has been a consistent and dedicated leader and advocate for occupational therapy. His leadership at the state level began in 2003 when he was elected as Vice-Chair of the Los Angeles Occupational Therapy Leadership Forum and then elected as Chair in 2005 serving for 2 years. In this capacity, he addressed leadership and management issues among a wide variety of occupational therapy managers. He was instrumental in providing guidance for new managers to engage in systematic staff reviews, supporting professional development, and program evaluation.

His passion for OT political advocacy began in 2003 when another healthcare discipline was pursuing a state legislative bill that would encroach on the occupational therapy domain of practice. Luis immediately took action through the state professional association, the Occupational Therapy Association of California (OTAC). He served as a committee member of OTAC’s Advocacy and Government Affairs Committee (AGAC) and eventually became the Chair of this AGAC for 3 years. The bill did not pass, due in large part to the tireless advocacy efforts of Dr. Arabit. Dr. Arabit clearly demonstrated a commitment to support advocacy efforts across the entire state to preserve the OT domain of practice within California. Given the size of California, OTAC adopted a regional model to engage OT practitioners but Luis service on OTAC AGAC served the entire state.

As a member of OTAC AGAC, Luis initiated meeting state legislators face to face to discuss state and federal issues pertaining to occupational therapy. He initiated numerous town hall meetings and eventually formed a regional grassroots advocacy practitioner group in the Los Angeles area. This group began as a 5-member group in 2009 and grew to a 25-member group in 2012. The objective of his leadership was to enable practitioners in the region to advocate for the profession, respond to licensure



issues, and express opinions in a professional manner while increasing knowledge about state legislative issues. His dedication eventually led the way to continuing efforts to host and coordinate annual legislative receptions in Los Angeles that paved way for practitioners to meet and have dialogues with legislators about issues affecting occupational therapy in California. This annual reception was touted as the “model” reception in the state and for all other regions of OTAC to follow. He continued his efforts for the legislative receptions that have become an annual event. The reception continues to be a strong showcase for occupational therapy practitioners and students interested in pursuing advocacy for the profession. Dr. Arabit and his committee members in the Los Angeles area established a successful model for advocacy that has now been replicated throughout all five regions of OTAC. This town hall model has been instrumental in providing OT practitioners the opportunities to dialogue with their elected representatives. Luis continued his leadership and was elected as the Vice-President of the OTAC serving from 2015-2017. During this period, Dr. Arabit led OTAC in a revision to the strategic plan and was instrumental in increasing membership throughout the state. His efforts resulted in the highest number of OT practitioners becoming members in OTAC’s history. Luis’ expertise in advocacy and leadership was recognized nationally and he was selected to serve as the Region 5 Director of the American Occupational Therapy Political Action Committee (AOTPAC) in 2018.

Dr. Arabit has tirelessly promoted the importance of advocacy for the profession of occupational therapy at state, national, and international conferences and universities. As of 2018, he serves as a board member of the Asian-Pacific Heritage Occupational Therapy Association and liaison to the Philippines to promote international professional leadership and advocacy. He is regularly called upon to inspire OT students to advocate for the profession and carry that passion into their role as an OT practitioner. His presentations to practitioners provides practical methods to become a grassroots advocate in everyday practice.

He has ensured occupational therapy is always represented at the table in regards to legislative bills as well as regulatory practice actions. Dr. Arabit, along with others, initiated the annual Legislative Hill Day in Sacramento to meet and dialogue with legislators about issues impacting the profession and consumers. He donated his time to make this an annual event. His advocacy efforts have produced significant positive outcomes for the profession by preserving the domain of practice as stipulated by California state licensure. He was instrumental in defending the professional scope of practice against encroachment by other professions that would curtail the role of occupational therapy practitioners to fully serve their clients.

Dr. Luis Arabit has been a tireless leader and advocate for the profession of occupational therapy. I am truly honored to nominate Luis for the FAOTA award as an “occupational therapy expert clinician, leader, and advocate”.