

## The making of a European Certified Hand Therapist (ECHT)



Being a European Certified Hand Therapist is rewarding yourself for the work you have done in your current career. Mine started in 1995 when I was educated as a hand therapist in an academic setting. Over the years I started teaching, gave national and international presentations, wrote some articles and above all brought evidence based practice to a higher level. For the last five years, I have also been travelling with the foundation Hands Across Borders to Nepal and India to teach and train local hand therapists on the job. My initial ECHT application was approved and so far, the easy part...

After having read the extensive handbook of the EFSHT I was in deep denial. It felt like a tremendous job was waiting for me. A family, a part-time job and maintaining a social life had to blend in with assembling my portfolio. In order to make it easier I divided the portfolio into three parts. My extended Curriculum Vitae, Short case study and Long case study.

Composing your Curriculum Vitae is about collecting all requested documents, making summaries of your professional experiences, presentations / lectures/ courses and describing your management skills and personal contribution to development of hand therapy. Each item must be evidenced in the appendix, preferably on official letterhead and always written in English. Make sure you reflect on all the above-mentioned items. Assessors are very keen on that. Each document I produced is a little piece of my Curriculum Vitae so the nice thing was I could work on this in a spare moment during a busy week and watch my portfolio grow. Don't forget to add three testimonials and use them to give some personality to your portfolio. I was really touched by my received testimonials and it motivated me to keep on going with the process.

All of the above was in contrast with writing my case studies. For me it was like living in "my ECHT bubble" and most of the time, I was thinking of how, why and what I was doing with my patient. Fortunately, I chose two interesting case studies and collected assessments over time before I started writing. I started to write my short case study using the requirements of the handbook. I thought my case studies were simple enough to match the small amount of words I was allowed to use. However, clinical reasoning and fitting in the requirements from the handbook was at times frustrating. Searching for

documentation, articles and guidelines that confirmed my actions as a hand therapist brought me more knowledge and even more questions. Expanded use of the ICF was not my normal routine but it helped me to write my case studies and achieve a better overview. Most of the feedback from the assessors was about not reflecting enough. Especially the long case study was comprehensive and not mainstream and didn't provide the best evidence for the simple reason there is not enough evidence based proof yet. So, make a smart choice in picking your case studies.

I was very lucky to find an advisor, a friend connected me to her, who gave me thorough feedback in a pleasant manner and also replied very fast when I sent her my case studies. She was already a European Certified Hand Therapist so she understood the job I was doing. Most importantly, find someone who is willing to give you honest feedback and let you do your own clinical reasoning. An advisor is not writing your portfolio.

Receiving the congratulatory mail from the ECHT coordinator was fantastic and rewarding for all my hard work. It made me realize I needed a new challenge in my career. I really enjoyed the analyzing part of the application and matching literature with every day practice. Never thought I would but this year I changed jobs.

At the website of the EFSHT a well readable handbook is available to make sure you match the qualifications and the requirements the portfolio needs to pass and obtain the title European Certified Hand Therapist. Read it over and over again and use it to your advantage. This was my story. Now it's your turn! Good luck!

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