


# Occupational Therapy in the Philippines:

## Progress, Challenges, and Opportunities

Michael Sy, PhD

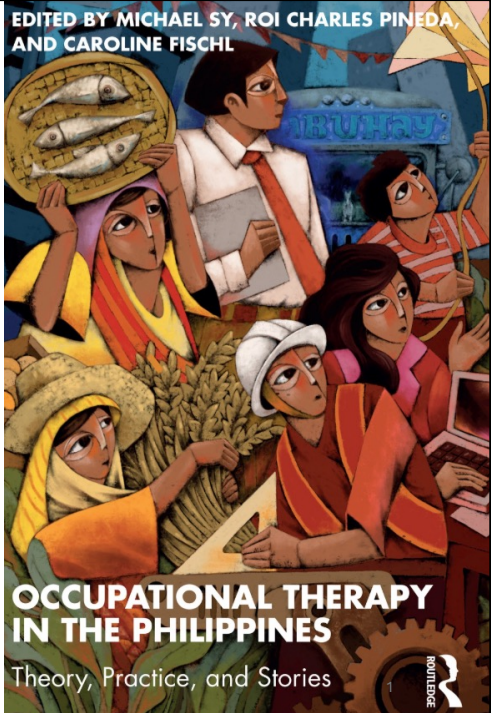
17 January 2026

Special thanks:



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## Are you ready for your Philippine tour?

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## Background

- Primary Affiliation: Senior Researcher, Institute of Occupational Therapy, Zurich University of Applied Sciences (Switzerland)
- Lead Editor and Author, *Occupational Therapy in the Philippines: Theory, Practice, and Stories* (Routledge UK)
- International academic with affiliations with Dalhousie University (Canada), University of Southern Queensland (Australia), Tokyo Metropolitan University (Japan), and University of the Philippines Open University (Philippines)
- Other relevant projects:
  - Return to Work Health Equity Project (ZHAW) - <https://www.zhaw.ch/en/research/project/76509>
  - Occupational Justice Health Questionnaire Project (Independent) - <https://www.drmikesyot.com/ojhg>
- Disclaimer and Positionality

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## Presentation Aims

- Introduce key chapters in the “Occupational Therapy in the Philippines” book characterizing the unique perspective of Filipino occupational therapy as a profession
- Share the collaborative process in the book project hoping to inspire OTs to work on a similar project

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## Book Overview

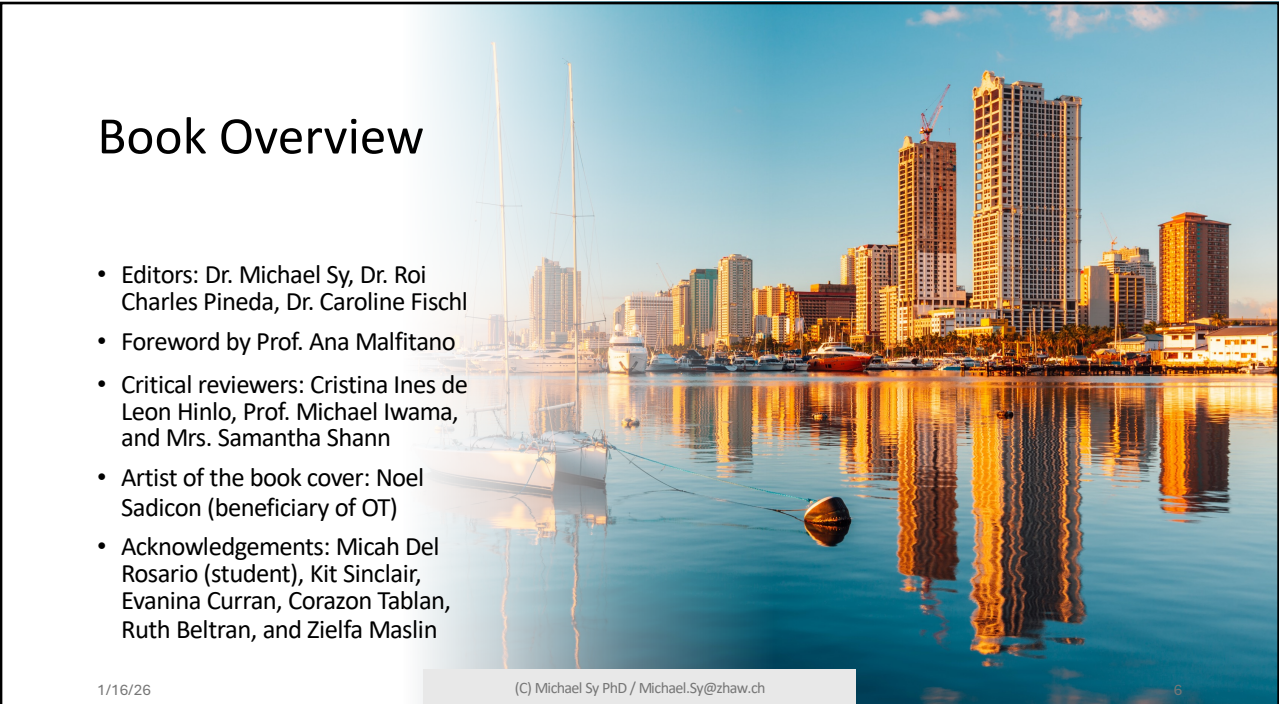
- 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 15 chapters divided into 4 sections
  - Sec 1. Theory owning and reclaiming
  - Sec 2. Developing the Filipino occupational therapist
  - Sec 3. Professional practice: caring, supporting, and partnering
  - Sec 4. Weaving research, ethics, and policies for the future
- Total of 30 contributors with Filipino heritage
- There are contributors who are not occupational therapists but have significantly contributed to fulfil the book's aim

GUIDE TO THE PHILIPPINES

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## Book Overview

- Editors: Dr. Michael Sy, Dr. Roi Charles Pineda, Dr. Caroline Fischl
- Foreword by Prof. Ana Malfitano
- Critical reviewers: Cristina Ines de Leon Hinlo, Prof. Michael Iwama, and Mrs. Samantha Shann
- Artist of the book cover: Noel Sadicon (beneficiary of OT)
- Acknowledgements: Micah Del Rosario (student), Kit Sinclair, Evanina Curran, Corazon Tablan, Ruth Beltran, and Zielfa Maslin

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# Progress

- Documenting a comprehensive history of the profession (Chapter 2) and the OT research landscape (Chapter 12)
- Highlighting the importance of occupational science in advancing OT practice in the Philippines (Chapter 3)
- Recognizing the equally valuable voices of patients (via case studies), OT students, teachers, and practitioners (Chapters 4, 6, 7-11)
- Proposing the PEARLs\* Framework (Chapter 15)  
\*Practice, Education, Advocacy, Research and Leadership in synergism

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# Challenges

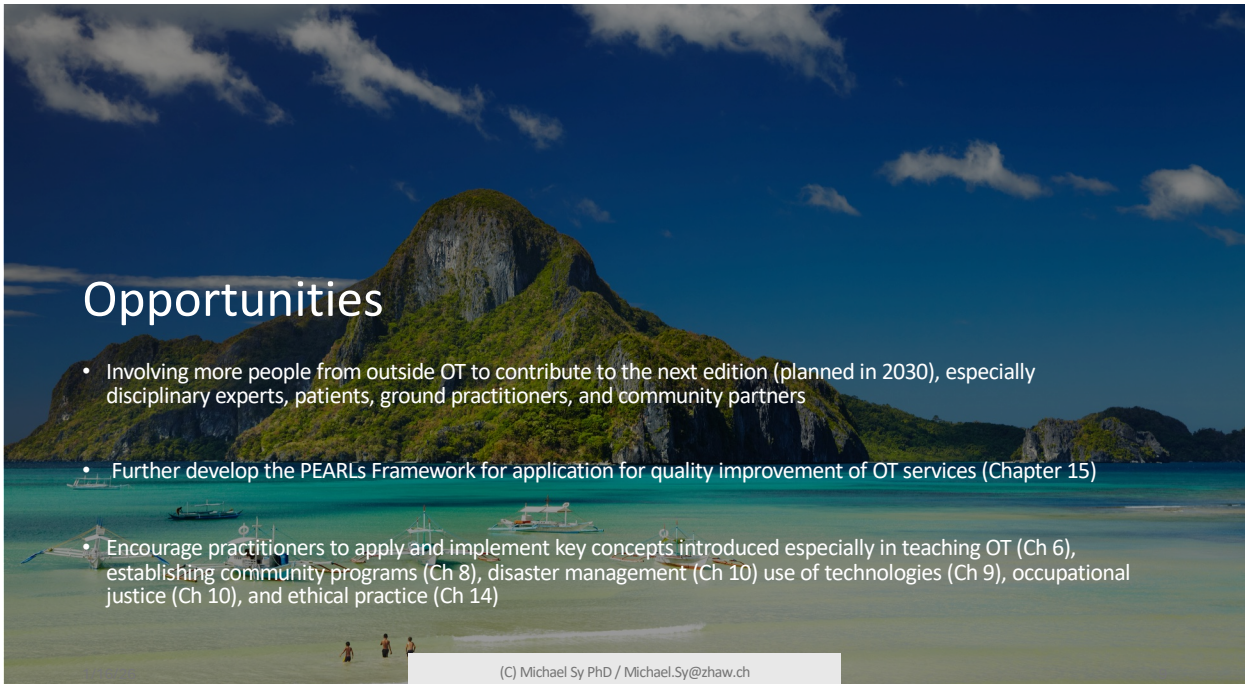
- Cultivating a both critical and occupational perspectives in how we think, do, and practice as occupational therapists remains challenging (Chapter 1)
- Expanding our occupational therapy beyond traditional practice settings (Chapters 8, 10, 11)
- Optimizing technology to the advantage of providing streamlined equitable, and high-quality OT services (Chapter 9)

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## Opportunities

- Involving more people from outside OT to contribute to the next edition (planned in 2030), especially disciplinary experts, patients, ground practitioners, and community partners
- Further develop the PEARLS Framework for application for quality improvement of OT services (Chapter 15)
- Encourage practitioners to apply and implement key concepts introduced especially in teaching OT (Ch 6), establishing community programs (Ch 8), disaster management (Ch 10) use of technologies (Ch 9), occupational justice (Ch 10), and ethical practice (Ch 14)

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## Book creation process

- How did we choose book contributors (editors, authors, artist)?
- How did we deal with time zone differences? How did we deal with timeline delays, personal priorities, authorship, conflicts etc.?
- How did we strategize the book promotion and expand readership?
  - Book launches (in person and online), partnering with experts from the book publishing industry
  - Maximizing social and mass media
  - Partnership with universities
  - Invited speakerships (e.g, OT Frontiers)

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# We made **history**, our **book** is finally **launched!**

## Occupational Therapy in the Philippines: *Theory, Practice, and Stories*

A historical milestone for all Filipino occupational therapists

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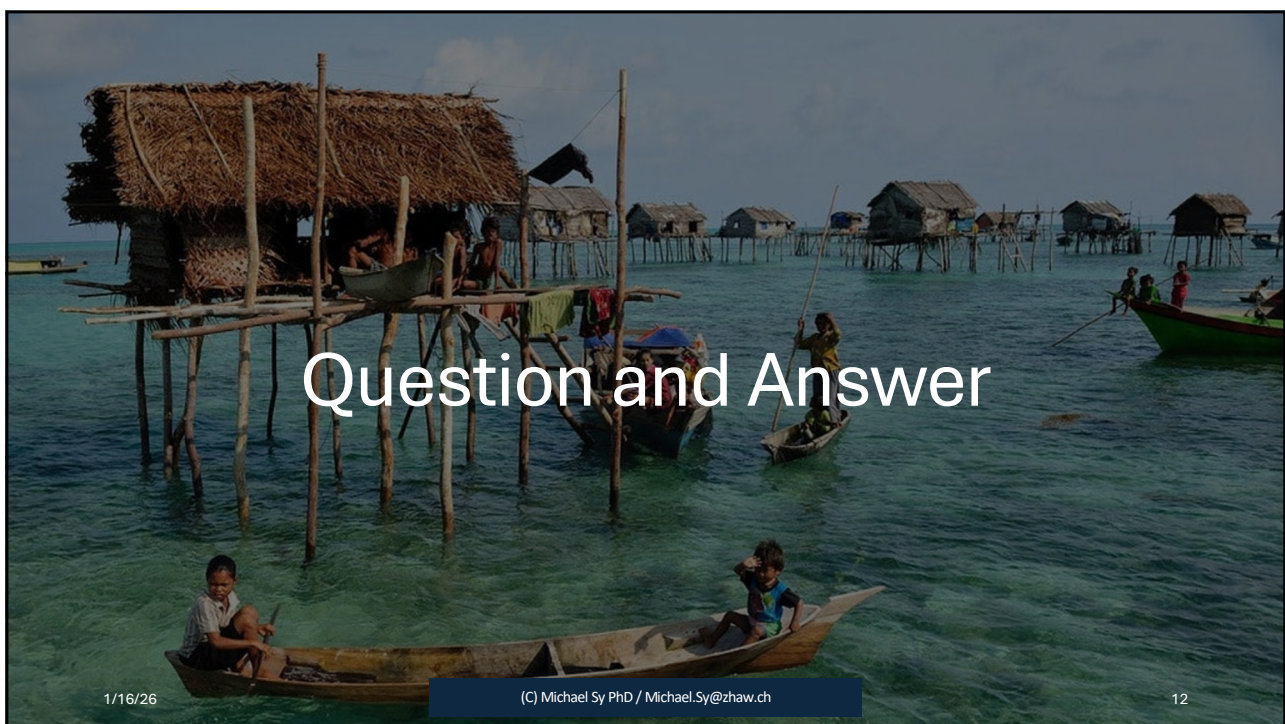
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