

Put an **OT** on **your team!**



Some of the clinics who **put an OT on their team**

Nova Scotia

Occupational therapists are hired as wellness navigators on the Community Health Teams (CHTs) in Dartmouth and Spryfield, Nova Scotia. The CHTs program, from Primary Health Care, Capital District Health Authority (CDHA) provides support and access to a range of wellness programs that complement services and programs already available in the community.

Québec

Since 2002, the Quebec Government initiative « groupes de médecine de famille (GMF) » has provided financial support to integrate other health professionals such as occupational therapists.

Ontario

Since 2010, funding has been available to include occupational therapists within the Family Health Teams, an interprofessional model of primary care. Ontario's initiative is one of the first examples of large-scale integration of occupational therapists into primary care teams in North America.

Manitoba

In 2011, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority and the University of Manitoba joined forces to create the Northern Connections Medical Centre, a primary care clinic that offers screening, diagnosis, medical management and education to help patients manage diabetes (Type 1, Type 2 and gestational) and other health conditions. The clinic hires several health professionals such as occupational therapists.

Evidence to support the role of occupational therapists

Chronic pain

- Occupational therapists educate patients on joint protection, fatigue, and stress management¹ as well as support them in maintaining valued social roles, setting realistic goals, pacing activity and using relaxation².
- Interdisciplinary pain programs offer the best clinical care and the most cost-effective long-term treatment option for people living with chronic pain³⁻⁶.

Mental health

- Occupational engagement is an important dimension of the recovery process in mental health⁷.
- Occupational therapists will support patients in their goals of replacing unhealthy activities, such as substance abuse, with healthy, meaningful activities⁸.
- Strong evidence indicates that social and life skills training programs as provided by occupational therapists are effective for children who have aggressive behaviours⁹ as well as for adults with serious mental illnesses¹⁰.

Occupational health

- Vocational issues are addressed by occupational therapists through the teaching of pain management techniques, ergonomic principles and the delivery of job retraining programs that include work simulation and on-site applications^{3,11}.
- Evidence supports the use of problem-solving therapy, one of the main occupational therapy interventions, as a way to significantly enhance the incidence of returning to work¹².
- Multidisciplinary interventions involving physical, psycho-educational and occupational components led to higher return-to-work rates of patients with cancer¹³.
- Workplace interventions such as the ones delivered by occupational therapists reduce the time required to return to work and improve functional status in workers with musculoskeletal disorders¹⁴.

Home care: fall prevention and home modifications

- Numerous studies report the positive impacts of occupational therapy interventions to support aging in place¹⁵⁻¹⁸.
- Interdisciplinary fall prevention programs were particularly cost effective for people considered to be at high risk (i.e. ≥80 years with a previous fall)¹⁹⁻²¹.
- Occupational therapy interventions are increasing home safety and quality of life for older adults and can result in significant cost savings^{15,22}.

Occupational therapy interventions involving home assessments and modifications cost between \$170 and \$1,800 USD per person and reduce the risk of falling from 25% to 41% (23-25). Such interventions have been judged to be cost effective within the Canadian context as well¹⁹, particularly if one considers that a hip replacement costs over \$8,000 CAD in hospital care alone²⁶.

Driving rehabilitation and assessment

- Through assessment and rehabilitation, occupational therapists support drivers in self-monitoring their driving health and address physical and cognitive changes resulting from aging, injury, or disease²⁷. They may also assist older adults' transition from the role of driver to passenger²⁸.
- Occupational therapy interventions have positive and significant effects on older drivers' safety and performance^{29,30}.

Capacity assessment

- Within several teams and according to prominent models of care, occupational therapists are designated as "capacity assessors"³¹.
- Occupational therapists' performance assessment using daily activities have been shown to successfully discriminate between normal and impaired cognitive functions³² and is recognized as a stepping stone in the diagnosis of Alzheimer disease³³.

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