

## **RESIDENTS OF ONTARIO LONG-TERM CARE HOMES LOSE ACCESS TO IMPORTANT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY SERVICES**

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### **Defining the Issue.....**

**Residents in Ontario Long-Term Care Homes have lost access to important occupational therapy services as a result of recent policy changes relating to the funding of physiotherapy services.**

Occupational Therapists (OTs) are regulated health professionals who work with residents of long-term care homes to promote their optimal function and independence in activities of daily living. Occupational therapy interventions are targeted to:

- prevent de-conditioning and functional decline for as long as possible
- restore function when impaired by periodic injury, illness or other factors
- promote adaptation when cognitive abilities are impaired in order to improve function and/or reduce behavioural episodes related to loss of independence or control
- improve quality of life and engaged participation in the restorative care environment and activity of the home
- assess and intervene to mitigate resident risk relating to
  - cognitive behavioural status which may result in wandering, outbursts, etc.
  - falls
  - skin breakdown and other wounds associated with poor skin integrity
  - use of restraints
  - environmental accessibility
  - mental health status

### **Why do residents no longer have access to the OT services they require?**

Over the past decade OHIP funded physiotherapy providers (called Designated Physiotherapy Clinics (DPCs) have offered OT services to homes without cost – as a value add component to their contract with a home. This practice, which was not officially sanctioned by the government, enabled homes to use their Program and Support Services Budget (from which OT services were to be funded) for other purposes. OT services were essentially covered by the profits of the DPC. Since the PT Funding Reform implementation (August 2013), this practice

has been discontinued. OSOT supports this change, however, while the government expects LTCHs to fund OT services from their Program and Support Services Budgets as has always been the expectation, homes now say that these budgets are fully expended and that there is no money for OT services. The result is a dismal lack of services for residents who have need for OT.

### What are the implications for residents, long-term care homes & our health care system?

- Occupational therapy services have been discontinued or severely cutback in homes across the province
- An important risk management profession is no longer addressing seating, falls prevention, pressure relief, restraint alternatives, behavioural issues that may result from cognitive decline. Resident incidents from falls, skin breakdown, etc. result in more hospitalizations and costs related to increased demands on LTC Home staff time
- Residents no longer have access to OT services that target to improve their functional status or to enable residents to adapt to changing functional status with the introduction of assistive devices. Increased dependence and risk results in reduced quality of life for residents
- Comprehensive seating and mobility assessments commonly required for residents in LTC Homes and typically provided by occupational therapists are difficult to access. The risk of falls and incidents is increased when appropriate solutions for seating/mobility needs are not addressed.
- Occupational therapists have lost jobs and contracts across the province

### What solutions are required? How can you help?

- OSOT is working with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to restore access to OT services. While there is recognition that this is important there has been no quick fix. We need your help.
- **Secure funding for OT services in Long-Term Care Homes needs to be restored.** The *Long-Term Care Homes Act, 2007* requires that Homes ensure occupational therapy services are accessible.
- We ask you to talk to the Minister of Health and your party caucus to raise this important concern.

### For more information contact:

Christie Brenchley, Executive Director  
Ontario Society of Occupational Therapists  
[cbrenchley@osot.on.ca](mailto:cbrenchley@osot.on.ca) – 416-322-3011/1-877-676-6768

For more information about occupational therapy visit [www.OTOntario.ca](http://www.OTOntario.ca).