

Occupational Therapy in Long-Term Care

What occupational therapists can offer residents and staff in long-term care homes:

Adaptive Equipment

OTs assess residents' needs for adaptive equipment, as well as provide education on proper use. These devices may include mobility aids such as wheelchairs and walkers, and other equipments like transfer poles, raised toilet seats, grab bars, reachers, dressing sticks, sock aids, and long-handled shoe horns.

ADL Assessments & Restorative Care

OTs assess residents' performance of their everyday tasks such as eating, grooming, dressing, bathing, and toileting. They then develop individualized, client-centered programs that may include positioning, set-up by staff, adaptive equipment, and cueing. The goal is to promote residents' ability to function to their full potential, thereby increasing their independence and self-esteem. This makes OTs valuable members of the restorative care team.

Behavioural Support

OTs assess the causes of behavioural problems that makes it hard to care and interfere with a resident's quality of life. They then provide recommendations to enhance the emotional and social well-being of residents, enable them to participate in everyday activities and routines, and decrease caregiver burnout.

Connect with Community Resources

OTs assess residents' needs and can support access to community services they would benefit from. These may include services for therapeutic footwear, augmentative communication devices, accessible transportation, compression garments, and funding.

Dementia Care

OTs assess clients with early onset dementia to check their thinking and memory skills. They also monitor changes, and ensure the safety and well-being of the clients. OTs work on preventing falls, and behavioral issues such as agitation and aggression. They develop specialized programs to provide meaningful activities to keep the mind active and reduce disruptive behavior.

Eating, Feeding & Swallowing

OTs assess and make recommendations based on a resident's feeding needs to increase independence in feeding or to increase swallowing safety and decrease risk of aspiration. Interventions may include proper mealtime positioning, adaptive feeding equipment, cueing or set-up by staff.

Falls Prevention

OTs work with a team to reduce risk of falls for residents. They assess resident status and behavioral change, and provide interventions. This may include changes to the living environment like rearranging bedroom furniture, providing assistive equipment like grab bars or transfer poles, and addressing any fear of falling.

Mobility & Seating

OTs assess residents to check if they need mobility and seating equipment (e.g. wheelchairs, walkers). They decide the right type and size of chair, and suitable accessories for safety, mobility, participation, and comfort. OTs also reassess the mobility and seating equipment, making sure it meets the needs of residents as their physical and cognitive abilities change.

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Pressure Wound Prevention & Management

OTs make recommendations for residents with existing pressure wounds or those at risk of developing them. This may include re-positioning schedules, bed positioning, special seating, and bedding surfaces. They also offer strategies to prevent contractures and stiffness.

Resident & Family Education

OTs teach residents and their family members important skills for resident safety, participation, dignity, and independence. This may include instruction on transfer techniques, positioning, use of specific mobility or other adaptive equipment, and compensatory strategies.

Restraint Reduction

OTs recommend alternative equipment, techniques, and positioning that reduce or eliminate the need for restraints. They also provide strategies for residents with behavioral issues and who might otherwise be restrained.

Splinting

OTs evaluate and make splints or recommend ready-made ones to help people move better and keep their range of motion. These devices also help prevent stiffness, pain, and further loss of function.

Staff In-Service Training

OTs can provide many educational programs to health care staff such as safe transfer techniques, usage of adaptive equipment, resident positioning techniques and communication strategies for residents with cognitive or sensory impairments.

Occupational therapists enhance quality of life through enabling participation in meaningful, everyday activities!

References:

American Occupational Therapy Association

- <http://www.aota.org/advocacy>

Complete Rehab Solutions

- <http://www.completerehabsolutions.com/blog/occupational-therapists-in-nursing-homes-part/>

Concerned Friends

- <http://www.concernedfriends.ca/>