



Occupational Therapy - Neuro Rehabilitation In Long-Term Care Unit

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Occupational therapy is a healthcare profession that helps people engage in daily activities they want or need to do. It focuses on enabling individuals to participate in meaningful occupations.

In long-term care settings, occupational therapists work with residents to improve or maintain their ability to perform everyday tasks such as dressing, eating, and personal hygiene. Occupational therapy practitioners are skilled in both physical and psychological evaluations of residents living in LTCU.

Scope of practice

- Improving motor skills
- Proper positioning strategies
- Hand splinting and assistive devices
- Enhancing cognitive function
- Adapting environments for safety
- Teaching compensatory techniques
- ADL retraining
- Fall prevention

ADL assessments and restorative care

Occupational Therapists assess residents' ability to perform daily tasks like eating, grooming, and dressing, then develop individualized, resident-centered plans. These may include positioning, staff setup, adaptive tools, and cueing. The goal is to maximize function, independence, and self-esteem, making OTs vital members of the restorative care team.

Eating, feeding and swallowing

Occupational Therapists assess residents' feeding needs to enhance independence and ensure safe swallowing, thereby reducing the risk of aspiration. Recommended interventions may include optimal mealtime positioning, adaptive feeding tools, cueing, or staff assistance.

Hand splinting and adaptive equipment

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

In LTC units, hand splints play a vital role, including fabrication of splints such as full cock-up, half cock-up, ankle-foot orthoses (AFO), and positioning aids like bed bumpers to prevent falls.

Mobility and seating

Occupational Therapists assess residents to determine the need for and prescribe appropriate mobility and seating equipment such as wheelchairs and walkers. They select the correct chair type, size, and accessories to promote safety, mobility, participation, and comfort. OTs regularly reassess this equipment as residents' physical and cognitive abilities change, ensuring continued suitability.

Pressure wound prevention and management

Occupational Therapists provide recommendations for residents with existing pressure wounds or those at high risk. These may include repositioning schedules, optimal bed positioning, specialized seating and bedding surfaces, and strategies to prevent worsening contractures.

Fall prevention

Occupational Therapists are key members of the multidisciplinary team focused on reducing residents' fall risk. They assess residents' physical and behavioral status and implement interventions such as modifying the living environment (e.g., rearranging furniture), providing assistive devices (e.g., grab bars, transfer poles), and addressing fear of falling.

Psychological support

Occupational Therapists assess the underlying causes of behavioral concerns that may hinder care and affect a resident's quality of life. They then offer recommendations to improve emotional and psychosocial well-being, support participation in daily activities, and reduce caregiver burnout.

Family education

Occupational Therapists educate residents and their families on skills essential for safety, participation, dignity, and independence. This education includes training on proper transfer techniques, positioning, use of mobility or adaptive equipment, and compensatory strategies.

Conclusion:

Occupational therapy plays an indispensable role in enhancing the quality of life for residents in long-term care settings. By addressing both physical and psychological needs, occupational therapists empower individuals to regain independence, ensure safety, and participate meaningfully in daily life. Through personalized interventions, adaptive strategies, and holistic care, OT practitioners stand as vital pillars in promoting dignity, function, and well-being across the continuum of care.