



Institute for Occupational Therapists In Private Practice

POWERED BY EZMED



WHAT IS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS' ROLE IN COVID & LONG COVID?

Occupational Therapy is a client-centred health profession that is concerned with the promotion of health and wellbeing through occupation, with the primary goal of enabling people to participate in everyday activities (World Federation of Occupational Therapists, June 2017 (revised)).

As the COVID-pandemic progresses the secondary complications and implications of this disease are becoming clear, and rehabilitation professionals are being brought into the frontline defence in an effort to reduce length of stay and facilitate faster, safer discharges to clear beds for those who are severely ill.

Research indicates that, at 6-month follow-up after hospitalisation for COVID:

- 34% of patients reported fatigue
- 31% exhibited memory/attention difficulties
- 30% developed sleep disorders
- 40% of patients exhibited neurological symptoms

A holistic view when assessing and treating remain center to the occupational therapist's responsibility - not just to save a patient's life but also ensure that they have a life worth living to return to.

WHY WOULD OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY BE REQUIRED?

- Occupational therapists facilitate family education and training when a patient is discharged and require continued support at home. Home visits are often required to help with the transition from hospital to the home environment.
- Improvement of participation in activities of daily living
- Cognitive rehabilitation
- Self-management strategies for anxiety
- Managing fatigue
- Return to work and vocational rehabilitation



WHEN IS AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY REFERRAL REQUIRED?

In the acute care setting, complications of respiratory disease may include impaired pulmonary function and subsequent fatigue, neuromuscular weakness, and cognitive impairments, as well as anxiety and depression (Desai, Law, & Needham, 2011). The curative, rehabilitative and adaptive role of OT in these functional domains are well-known and accepted.

OTs perform home-based risk assessments, advice on positioning, functional evaluations, re-assurance, energy conservation strategies, anxiety management, gradual re-engagement in activity, etc, to work with patients to improve participation in their roles and situations in their homes, workplaces, communities, and other settings.

The occupational therapy intervention in an acute setting focuses on:

- Activity participation and improving function in activities of daily living
- Engaging the patient in meaningful activities to support the mental health of the patient and build therapeutic rapport with the patient and provide supportive counselling.
- Facilitating contact with the family
- Providing support for the MDT (multi-disciplinary team)

The occupational therapy intervention in the sub-acute/rehabilitation setting focuses on

- Client centered goal-setting
- Activities of daily living (ADLs) en Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) skills eg self-care & grooming
- Sensory stimulation
- Early mobilisation
- Engaging the patient in meaningful activities to support the mental health of the patient and build therapeutic rapport with the patient and provide supportive counselling
- Cognitive stimulation
- Assistance with discharge planning and community reintegration
- Provision of assistive devices
- Provision of client centered home programs to facilitate and support a life worth living.

WHO ARE OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS?

Occupational therapy is a regulated health profession and requires specific university training which complies with national and international standards of training. The training of an OT requires holistic approaches well suited for work with COVID and long COVID.

The occupational therapy intervention in long COVID focuses on

- Support for return to work and vocational rehabilitation
- Cognitive therapies, including CBT and ACT
- Respiratory rehabilitation/breathing techniques
- Sleep hygiene
- Mindfulness and other anxiety management strategies
- Self-management education groups/support groups
- Pacing/goal setting
- Routine/structure/activity scheduling
- Activity adaptation
- Stretching/ROM exercises
- Hydrotherapy
- Functional mobility relating to occupational performance
- Sensory modulation strategies - depending on sensitivity
- Monitoring set back triggers:
 - o Sensory sensitivity
 - o Load vs capacity
 - o Pacing daily activities
 - o Monitor infections

WHERE CAN I GET OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY?

Occupational therapists provide COVID and Long COVID services in the following settings:

- Acute settings
- Sub-acute and rehabilitation settings
- Outpatient therapy and home visits

PRACTICE: