DON'T BE SO BASIC: EXPANDING THE ROLE OF OTS WORKING WITH OLDER ADULTS

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BACKGROUND

Occupational therapists are primed to handle the challenges of an ever-changing healthcare world. Along with showcasing their values across the lifespan, OTs can promote functional wellness with varying degrees of needs and assistance levels.[2] It is important we do not limit ourselves, but identify ways we can continue to enhance the lives of all our patients. Here, we explore hot topics including technology, pelvic floor considerations, and creating a skilled—*and fun*—treatment environment.

Pelvic floor principles can be implemented in all settings and should not be ignored when working with older adults. According to the CDC, 43.8% of non-institutionalized Americans ages 65 and older and 70.3% of long-term care residents were reported to have experienced urinary leakage (Davis, 2020).[3] Incontinence is not a normal part of aging and can be addressed outside the bathroom walls.

We present Ms. Smith, an 88-year-old active female who has become increasingly isolated due to frequent urination, poor sleep patterns, declining vision, and withdrawal caused by difficulty managing evolving technological tasks. She lives alone but has family support from two children and four grandchildren to assist with tech issues. Now, we showcase how OT can move beyond the basics and restore functional wellness in areas Ms. Smith did not realize OT could help.

OBJECTIVES

1) Expand the role of geriatric OT as it relates to various interventions including technology, pelvic floor considerations, and *FUN*ctional interventions.

2) Provide specific intervention ideas to integrate tomorrow into plans of care with patients of varying abilities and needs.

LET'S BE "FUN"CTIONAL!

- *What would you love to do again?*
- *What did you love most about that activity?*
- *What is something you did 10 years ago you want to do again?*
- *What prevents you from doing ___?*
- *How did you sleep last night?*

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH AN OLDER ADULT THAT WAS "FUN"CTIONAL?

- Gamification
- Mind & Body
- Competition
- Functional Movement

"I want to tell you how helpful the continence training is. In just 3 weeks there is a very real difference in how many times I leak. The exercises are extremely helpful and have given me an understanding of how the body works" ~ Continence Program Participant

INTERVENTIONS

APPS/RESOURCES	FUNCTION
Alexa	Control switches, calendars, to-do lists, reminders, HEP, home safety
TapTapSee, Google Lookout, Seeing AI, Supersense, Be My Eyes, Bespecular, Cash Reader	Assist with object recognition during ADLs/IADLs
Audible, Libby, Kindle App, Bookshare, Overdrive	Health management, medical collateral, social participation, leisure
Uber/Lyft with Aira, Blindsquare, Soundscape	Navigation/transportation for health management

AREAS TO ADDRESS WITH INCONTINENCE	HOW TO ADDRESS
Environment	Room layout, positioning on toilet, AE/DME to prevent rushing and improve positioning
Lifestyle	Limiting/reducing bladder irritants, identifying optimal daily fluid intake amount and timing, reviewing medication regiment
Behavioral	Urge suppressant techniques, proper load transfer techniques (timing of pursed lip breathing), behavioral management techniques for caregivers of patients living with dementia
Exercise	Strengthens and lengthens pelvic floor muscles, improves core activation with functional tasks, improves posture
Education	Types of urinary incontinence/fecal incontinence, muscle anatomy, bathroom hygiene, bladder irritants, pelvic floor therapy (in person, telehealth, hybrid)

DISCUSSION

Our role in working with the older adult population should not shy away from technological advancements and conversations you might pursue with a much younger patient. We should look beyond the basic ADLs and dive deeper into what is meaningful for the older adult generation. Difficulty toileting goes beyond just managing clothing and hygiene—we should consider positioning, targeted exercises, and technology to support. Technology may be daunting for this population; however, its members may have supports in place to help integrate it into their daily routines.[1] Occupational therapists must consistently evolve and continue to explore new ways to provide the highest level of clinical care.

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