

Rehab News



Submitted By: Therapy Department at Healthcare Therapy Services, Inc.

Occupational Therapy's Role in Dementia Care

Dementia is a result of damage to the brain, resulting in impaired brain function and cognition. The onset of dementia is gradual and can progress over several years. Alzheimer's disease, which makes up 60% - 80% of dementia cases, primarily affects people over 65 years of age. Common signs of dementia include; decreased short-term memory, decreased problem solving skills, decreased perceptual skills, and personality changes.

Occupational Therapy is a valuable tool for those suffering from dementia. Occupational therapists evaluate persons with dementia to determine their strengths, impairments, and performance areas needing intervention. Though there is no cure, occupational therapy intervention may allow the patient to have improved function through compensation and/or adaptation. Treatment during the early stages may help to delay the progression of the disease and help the patient prolong independence. Throughout the stages of dementia, the role of the occupational therapist will change to meet the needs of the patient and their caregivers. Below are some examples.

STAGES OF DEMENTIA	HOW OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY CAN HELP
Early	Individual may have difficulty with higher-level executive skills and may be referred to occupational therapy for driving, work, and a home safety evaluation. Therapists may provide wellness programs, such as fall prevention and caregiver support.
Mid	Home safety and staying engaged in personally meaningful tasks become the main focus.
Late	Individual may have difficulty with basic activities of daily living. Focus may switch to decreasing caregiver burden and enhancing basic care such as safe transfers, avoiding contractures and providing enjoyable sensory stimulation.

At Healthcare Therapy Services, our therapists utilize a specialized dementia care program titled *Embracing the Cognitive Spectrum*. This program focuses on utilizing the Allen Cognitive Framework to recognize and reinforce use of remaining abilities to help those living with dementia reach their highest functional level. If you or a loved one live with dementia, speak with your doctor to find out how a therapy treatment plan could benefit you.



CELEBRATE NATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY MONTH – April 2017

Occupational therapy practitioners enable people of all ages to live life to its fullest by promoting health and helping prevent—or live better with—injury, illness, or disability.

References: The American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc.

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