



POSITION STATEMENT

Occupational Therapy and Rehabilitation

Statement of the position being taken

The World Health Organization (WHO) understands rehabilitation as “a set of interventions designed to optimize functioning and reduce disability in individuals with health conditions in interaction with their environment” (WHO, 2017). Occupational therapy offers a broader variety of rehabilitation services to people of all ages, groups and communities, to enable their full participation in everyday life and full inclusion in society - in their home, education, work and leisure environment. People who experience a mismatch between their abilities and the context in which they participate can benefit from rehabilitation services.

WFOT understands rehabilitation as a collaborative enabling process that recognizes full and effective participation and inclusion in society as a basic human right (UN 2006). Access to rehabilitation and occupational therapy, with its focus on reablement is a basic human right. Rehabilitation recognises the choice of the individual, community and society in identifying priorities and goals to achieve a meaningful life where they live, love, work and play.

Statement of the significance of position or issue to occupational therapy

Occupational therapy adopts a person/client-centred approach that focuses on occupation, including occupational performance and occupational engagement. Occupational therapy is resource oriented and focused on enabling people to change aspects of their person, the occupation (everyday activities), the environment, or some combination of these, to enhance participation. This competence makes occupational therapy a unique and central profession in rehabilitation. Occupational therapy spans multiple sectors beyond that of health, including education, labour, and social development – in fact any area that contributes to supporting people’s engagement in meaningful occupation.

Occupational therapy has a substantial role in rehabilitation due to its:

- appreciation of rehabilitation as a human right;
- person centred approach;
- expertise in understanding the complex interactions between the person/family/community, the environment and occupations;
- main goal being occupational engagement and full participation; and,
- cost effectiveness for society.

Statement of the significance of the position to society when appropriate

The WFOT recognises that with the increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases and greater life expectancy, the demand for rehabilitation is escalating. According to the WHO, rehabilitation in many countries is not meeting the needs of the population (WHO, 2017). The WFOT acknowledges that many people around the world do not have access to occupational therapy rehabilitation services, and advocates for equal opportunities to rehabilitation as a human right. Considering the potential

contribution of rehabilitation to UN Sustainable Development Goal 3, “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”, this paper comes at an opportune time when global coordinated action is critical (WHO, 2017).

Occupational therapy rehabilitation is central to support persons, groups or communities to live life to the fullest, to participate in, and enjoy, occupations that matter to them. The opportunity for individuals to maximize their potential and to participate in society, promotes health while being cost effective and productive. Occupational therapists can work to benefit communities by promoting active citizenry and participation in society. Maximum benefit can be enhanced through a lens of sustainability, considering impacts to the environment as well as a sustainable and effective health care systems.

Conclusion

All people, groups and communities have the right to engage fully in their lives and to participate in society. Occupational therapists have expertise to provide rehabilitation to support and facilitate full participation and inclusion.

References

World Health Organization (2017). *Rehabilitation 2030: a call for action. Meeting report*. Geneva: World Health Organization. Available at <http://www.who.int/disabilities/care/Rehab2030MeetingReport2.pdf?ua=1> [accessed 20 January 2019]

UN General Assembly, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 24 January 2007, A/RES/61/106, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/45f973632.html> [accessed 21 January 2019]

Bibliography

World Federation of Occupational Therapists Position Statements available at www.wfot.org :

- Community Based Rehabilitation (2004)
- Human Rights (2006)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (2012)
- Activities of Daily Living (CM 2012)
- Environmental Sustainability, Sustainable Practice within Occupational Therapy (2012)
- Scope and Extension of Practice (2014)
- Statement on Occupational Therapy (2010)

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Appendix: Challenges and strategies

Appreciating the many challenges to provision of rehabilitation including a lack of appreciation for its benefits, the bias towards funding medical care as opposed to rehabilitation, and other issues such as poor human and financial resourcing, the WFOT supports the call from the WHO for urgent, global action by all stakeholders, including occupational therapy.

- Dissemination
 - Publication on the WFOT website
 - Communication with member countries and organizations
 - Communication with WHO
 - Communication with international rehabilitation and disability organizations
- Education:
 - Increase awareness of the contribution of occupational therapy to rehabilitation and the role occupational therapy can play in rehabilitation agendas;
 - Increase and strengthen the support of occupational therapy education programmes especially in countries where there are no or few occupational therapists currently;
 - Share success stories of the occupational therapy contribution to rehabilitation in different countries
- Research:
 - Increase the number and quality of rehabilitation research studies that include occupational therapy to strengthen the evidence-base;
 - Encourage collaborative research projects that are representative of the diverse contexts and practice settings in which occupational therapy is provided;
 - Strengthen inter-professional rehabilitation research;
- National Occupational Therapy associations are encouraged to:
 - Develop / support leadership development in rehabilitation
 - Lobby government to increase and strengthen rehabilitation services and resourcing.