

Position Statement SCOPE AND EXTENSION OF PRACTICE

Introductory statement of the purpose of the paper

There are increasing expectations that occupational therapists will graduate with skill sets that are not within the core skill set expected of entry-level practitioners. Examples of this phenomenon include: physical agent modalities, cognitive behavioral techniques, oxygen management and wound care. This position statement is intended to clarify the scope of occupational therapy practice in terms of basic competence, proficiency and advanced practice skills.

Statement of the position being taken

WFOT supports strongly a commitment to occupation, occupational performance and occupational engagement as the foundational concepts of the profession of occupational therapy. Occupational therapy practice is focused on enabling individuals to change aspects of their person, the occupation, the environment, or some combination of these to enhance occupational participation. WFOT recognises that there are many additional skill sets that are adjuncts to the work of occupational therapy, but that these skills are not to be considered mandatory for or central to entry-level practice.

Statement of the significance of position or issue to occupational therapy

During the 1960's and 1970's, occupational therapy was framed by the medical model and became integrated into many roles, including many tasks that were required by rehabilitation teams in physical medicine and psychiatric services. These role components arose from observable gaps in the way in which services were delivered. Since colleagues from other professions struggled with understanding what occupational therapists could provide, it is not surprising that they made assumptions about what were appropriate requests to make of their occupational therapy team members.

In the later 20th century, theories of occupation and models of occupational therapy practice were created in many countries around the globe; the knowledge of these innovations spread quickly resulting in a wide application of these ideas. This was a direct challenge to the previous practice models that stemmed from the level of impairment and disability, and not from the patient's perspective of participation in their life and society. Many practitioners chose to stay with what they knew best and what were familiar rather than framing their practice using the emerging approaches.

This situation remains in many practice settings. Skills that are easy to observe are valued more than those that are less obvious, such as enabling clients, through assessment and intervention planning built on mutual partnerships. It is from this established perspective that practitioners will choose to develop skills such as applying physical agent modalities and cognitive behavioral techniques. The WFOT sees these skill sets as another layer of assessment and treatment. These skill sets may have their place in occupational therapy practice, but in an extended practice scope and not at the core of occupational therapy practice. This practice core is realized through the interactions and inter-relationships between person, occupation and environment, and in the ideas within occupation, occupational performance and occupational engagement.

Statement of the significance of the position to society when appropriate

Explaining the value and relevance of occupational therapy services to potential clients must become a natural and simple process for all occupational therapists. Embracing ideas such as person-environment-occupation relationships is the beginning of developing a partnership between the client and the therapist; this relationship is based upon the importance of framing practice based on what the client sees as priorities. Through these experiences, more and more members of society will become

familiar with occupational therapy's value; more and more examples will be shared that reinforce why occupational therapy can be the service of choice.

Substantiating rationale for the position

WFOT states clearly the need to develop and promote competent, ethical occupational therapy practice according to the Statement of Occupational Therapy (2010), the Position Statement on Activities of daily living and Position Statement on Consumer Interface. It is important to promote the core and value of occupational therapy to government organizations, non-governmental organizations and the wider community. By supporting this position it will help members, member organizations and the profession, world wide¹

Challenges and strategies

- Circulate this position statement to member organizations
- Request delegates to circulate the position statement to members of their organizations
- Hold a session at member countries' Congresses/Conferences to debate this practice expectation
- Send a communiqué to educational programs, through the Delegates, requesting they consider the position statement in the context of their educational curricula.
- Consider undertaking a survey of position statement uptake, critique, etc. by national associations, academic programs and other key informants as identified

Conclusion

The purpose of this position statement is to provide a reference point for member organizations/countries when developing strategies to move the profession forward in areas of: education, practice and role emergence, research projects and government policy. This reference point is based upon the core of occupational therapy practice: enabling a person's participation in priority occupations within their environment.

¹ Operational Plan 2012-2013, 2a, 3a