

Occupational Therapy in a Hospital Setting

The primary goal in a hospital setting is to stabilize the patient's medical status and address any threats to his or her life and loss of function. Occupational therapy plays an important role in facilitating early mobilization, restoring function, preventing further decline, and coordinating care, including transition and discharge planning.

Benefits of Occupational Therapy in Critical Care

The unique perspective of occupational therapy focuses on the many factors that can influence the success of each person's recovery and the rehabilitation process. Knowledge of normal human development, from neonate (Infant) through geriatrics (older populations), allows occupational therapy practitioners to contribute a broad range of skills to critical care services.

How Occupational Therapy Complements Specialty Services in Critical Care

Critical Care

- Evaluate the need for splints and positioning devices to preserve joint integrity and protect skin from breakdown due to prolonged pressure.
- Train families and caregivers to assist with range-of-motion exercises, safe transfers and mobility, and skin checks. Medical-Surgical, Neurology, and Orthopedics

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- Provide training in self-care activities (e.g., bathing, dressing) with adaptive or durable medical equipment and/or compensatory techniques if needed.
- Improve clients' ability to move in and out of bed and maintain an upright posture necessary to perform self-care and home management activities.
- Remediate upper-extremity weakness and/or abnormal muscle tone through exercise, simulated activities, and preventive splinting.
- Provide wheelchair assessment and management to promote endurance and mobility.
- Train patients in postsurgical orthopedic protocols, including appropriate weight bearing and postsurgical precautions during activities of daily living (ADLs)
- Develop home programs and instruct patients, family members, and caregivers in how to use the programs to continue rehabilitation after discharge.
- Fabricate and provide assistive devices and protective orthoses and splints, and train patients in their use, to promote healing and maximize independence.
- Where applicable, teach specific techniques for functional mobility (e.g., safe car transfers).

Occupational therapy also provides specialty services in the fields of psychiatry/behavioral health and pediatrics. Occupational therapy practitioners collaborate closely with other health care team professionals such as case managers, nurses, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists, and physicians to create an interdisciplinary plan of care and a coordinated and appropriate discharge plan.

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