

# Advancements in Geriatric Occupational Therapy: A Comprehensive Review

Rupinderjit Kaur\*

## Abstract

*In contemporary society, the prevalence of illnesses among the elderly population has become increasingly apparent. As individuals age, they often encounter various health challenges that can significantly impact their quality of life. Amidst this landscape, geriatric occupational therapy emerges as a pivotal intervention aimed at fostering an active and fulfilling lifestyle for older adults. The role of geriatric occupational therapy cannot be overstated, as it serves as a cornerstone in enhancing functional abilities and promoting independence among seniors. Through a comprehensive approach tailored to the unique needs of each individual, occupational therapy teams endeavor to optimize overall well-being and mitigate the limitations imposed by age-related conditions. Within both community settings and residential aged care facilities, occupational therapists assume a central position in addressing the multifaceted needs of older adults. Their interventions encompass a wide array of age-related concerns, including but not limited to balance issues, cognitive decline, sensory impairments, and mobility limitations. By employing evidence-based strategies and therapeutic modalities, these professionals strive to empower older individuals to navigate daily activities with confidence and autonomy. Moreover, geriatric occupational therapy extends beyond mere rehabilitation, encompassing preventive measures and strategies for long-term wellness. Through education, environmental modifications, and lifestyle interventions, occupational therapists equip older adults with the tools and knowledge needed to proactively manage their health and maximize their potential for aging gracefully. In essence, the field of geriatric occupational therapy embodies a holistic approach to aging, emphasizing not just the mitigation of symptoms, but the cultivation of resilience, independence, and vitality in older adults. By addressing the complex interplay of physical, cognitive, and psychosocial factors, occupational therapy facilitates a paradigm shift towards aging as a journey marked by continued growth and fulfillment.*

**Keywords:** Geriatric occupational therapy, aging population, functional independence, age-related conditions, holistic wellness

## INTRODUCTION

Geriatric occupational therapy is also helpful for old people maintain health and stay fit and fine. They assist older people with age-related issues like balance problems, memory loss, confusion, hearing loss, and vision impairment that affect their daily activities [1].

### \*Author for Correspondence

Rupinderjit Kaur  
E-mail: sandhurupinderjit0@gmail.com

Assistant Professor, Department of Medical Surgical Nursing,  
Mai Bhago College of Nursing Tarn Taran, Punjab, India

Received Date: March 27, 2024  
Accepted Date: April 29, 2024  
Published Date: May 11, 2024

**Citation:** Rupinderjit Kaur. Advancements in Geriatric Occupational Therapy: A Comprehensive Review. International Journal of Geriatric Nursing. 2024; 7(1): 9–14p.

## Benefits

1. Prevent falls.
2. Create a safer, more accessible living environment.
3. Utilize equipment like shower rails and wheelchairs for mobility and daily activities.
4. Enhance mobility and function through various adaptive strategies.
5. Plan for retirement or make workplace adjustments to support longer work engagement.
6. Provide education and guidance on age-related

conditions like dementia.

7. Encourage participation in leisure and social activities.

The demand for aged care services including occupational therapists, is expected to rise due to the aging population. Occupational therapists work in different settings such as hospitals, rehabilitation centres, community health organizations, and private practices to assess abilities, create plans for maintaining independence, and provide ongoing support and management. Occupational therapy helps people of all ages, from young children to the elderly, to develop, maintain, or regain the skills needed for daily activities that are important and necessary. The type of occupational therapy someone receives depends on their specific needs. For instance, a senior with Parkinson's will have a different treatment plan than a child with Scoliosis. Occupational therapists also educate and collaborate with the patient's support system, like parents, caregivers, and teachers, to ensure everyone knows their role in the patient's care plan. So, how can an occupational therapist assist an older patient? Let's explore.

### **Overcoming Daily Challenges**

One of the main goals of an occupational therapist is to help patients overcome the difficulties they face in their daily lives. For many seniors, simple tasks like walking or eating can be very tiring and challenging. This situation can result in feelings of defeat and abandonment of these activities midway. As everyday tasks become challenging, there may also be a decline in interest in social engagements, family interactions, and leisure pursuits, leading to experiences of isolation and melancholy. In such instances, the vital support of occupational therapists becomes evident. They work with older adults to teach them exercises and strategies to make daily activities like dressing, eating, and bathing easier. By improving motor skills, strength, and flexibility, even small progress can make a big difference in everyday tasks [2].

### **Fall Prevention**

Every 11 seconds, an elderly individual seeks emergency medical attention as a result of a fall, with a fall-related fatality occurring every 19 minutes. Although falls may appear inconsequential, these statistics underscore their gravity for older adults. Enrolling your parent in occupational therapy can be instrumental in fall prevention. Occupational therapists possess the expertise to impart strategies aimed at mitigating the risk of falls among elderly individuals.

### **Types of Occupational Therapy**

#### ***Relaxation techniques***

This process includes contracting and subsequently loosening various muscle groups.

#### ***Physical exercises***

It includes moving your body in different ways, using a medicine ball, and doing squats.

#### ***Personal activities***

It is like taking care of yourself, getting dressed, and doing household chores are important.

#### ***Cognitive exercises***

Such as reading out loud, doing multiple tasks at once, and engaging in activities that challenge the brain, can also be beneficial.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Enjoyable recreational activities like playing games indoors, sharing stories, and attending social events are great ways to stay active and engaged. Remember to work with your loved one and their doctor to determine the best type of therapy based on their needs, whether it's improving mobility, maintaining independence, or promoting overall well-being. Geriatric occupational therapy is a type of healthcare that focuses on the needs of older adults to help them function better. Elderly people often have many health problems, so a team of healthcare professionals is needed to take care of them. Even

though many older people are retired, occupational therapy can help them stay independent in their homes or assisted-living communities. Occupational therapists who work with older adults have advanced degrees and specialize in helping them with daily activities like eating, dressing, and walking. They also assist with more intricate activities, like utilizing technology for writing or typing. Their main goal is to help older adults be as independent as possible and have a good quality of life. The first step in geriatric occupational therapy is to evaluate what an older person can do and how safe their environment is. Safety is important for older adults who may have trouble with balance or vision. Therapists look for potential risks, like stairs without handrails or rugs that could cause falls. They also suggest changes to make the home safer and more comfortable, like grab bars in the bathroom or better lighting to prevent falls. Some older adults may need special equipment, like adaptive tools for eating, while others may need changes to their environment to stay safe. Occupational therapists can also help with managing an older person's overall well-being, including their physical health, support system, finances, and medical issues. They can offer advice on enhancing life quality and reducing healthcare costs [3].

Physical occupational therapy for the elderly helps improve range of motion by using personalized exercises to reduce stiffness, increase flexibility, and enhance strength. These exercises help prevent falls and promote independence as older individuals become more capable of completing tasks on their own. Occupational therapists can also work on improving vision in elderly individuals through visual and brain exercises during therapy sessions. This can help maintain and enhance their vision as they age.

Self-care is a crucial element in occupational therapy for older adults. Therapists help develop habits like brushing teeth, tying shoes, and doing household chores independently, which can improve their ability to function without constant assistance. Occupational therapy can also help improve cognitive skills and memory in older adults, helping them retrieve memories and enhance cognitive function through sensory stimulation and memory-building exercises. Occupational therapy assists seniors in managing chronic pain more effectively by introducing alternative, healthier strategies for coping. This includes better communication skills and proactive pain control strategies through physical exercise or ergonomic adjustments.

In summary, occupational therapy plays a vital role in enhancing the well-being and independence of elderly individuals by addressing their physical, visual, cognitive, and emotional needs through tailored exercises and methods. Engaging in occupational therapy activities is crucial for seniors to enhance their quality of life, fostering independence, and overall health. These activities not only aid in fall prevention but also bolster cognitive abilities. Seniors benefit from tailored activities provided by occupational therapists, allowing them to continue living fulfilling lives. As seniors get older, it is vital to engage in activities that entertain and challenge the mind. Engaging in crossword puzzles and word games presents seniors with enjoyable opportunities to sharpen their cognitive abilities. These activities challenge their problem-solving, memory, and language skills, contributing to mental acuity [4].

Participating in crossword puzzles and word games aids in enhancing cognitive functions among seniors, such as memory, attention, and executive functions. Research indicates that involvement in these pursuits reduces the likelihood of cognitive decline and enhances overall brain health in older individuals. The cognitive demands of solving puzzles and uncovering words assist seniors in preserving their cognitive abilities and staving off cognitive deterioration.

In addition to the cognitive benefits, crossword puzzles and word games provide a social dimension that effectively addresses feelings of loneliness and isolation among seniors. Seniors have the opportunity to engage in these activities alongside friends, family, or within group settings, fostering social interaction and a sense of connection. This social involvement contributes to improved mental well-being, reduced stress levels, and a greater sense of belonging.

---

Both occupational therapy and physical therapy play crucial roles in aiding patients' recovery and enhancing their quality of life while also preventing further health deterioration. Physical therapy helps restore the function and movement of body parts, while occupational therapy helps patients with daily activities. Physical therapists use exercises to improve mobility, while occupational therapists use activities to help patients relearn basic skills for independence. Occupational therapy is crucial during rehabilitation because it helps patients adjust to limitations and regain their self-image. Patients with injuries that affect their daily activities may feel a sense of dysfunction and desire for normalcy. Occupational therapy can help patients improve their functional abilities and regain independence by including daily activities in their treatment plan. This can enhance their quality of life and sense of self.

Occupational therapists assist individuals in modifying or adapting their daily activities according to their needs or preferences. This may involve altering the nature of the activity itself, adjusting the environment in which the activity takes place, or enhancing the individual's skills necessary for performing these tasks. At the skill level, an Occupational Therapist (OT) can assist patients in enhancing their fine motor skills. Fine motor skills involve small movements using the upper body and are important for tasks like brushing teeth, cutting food, getting dressed, using a phone, or driving. For individuals with mental health issues, an OT can help improve skills by teaching positive coping strategies to help them succeed at work or school [5].

At the start of each session, OTs focus on helping patients enhance their capacity to carry out everyday tasks. This is the main goal of every session. In addition to enhancing independence in daily activities, occupational therapy services focus on providing training to improve skills and increase strength and quality of life. Older adults can benefit from the assistance provided by OTs. Development of basic motor skills involves more than just movement — it also involves strength, physical changes, and muscle flexibility. As people age, they often experience a decline in muscle strength, which can be improved with regular exercise.

Therefore, OTs work to enhance fine motor skills in elderly patients. They help them with regular exercise and enable them to carry out basic everyday tasks that involve muscle movement. Occupational therapy can also help older individuals lead happier lives by reducing chronic pain and keeping their muscles active to prevent falls. By helping patients adapt to physical, mental, and social changes that come with aging, OTs assist them in staying engaged with the world around them. As elderly patients age, they may experience various physical and mental health challenges, such as forgetfulness and decreased sensory stimulation. Occupational therapy can aid in improving their cognitive skills.

OTs can also help improve the emotional well-being of senior adults who may be vulnerable to physical, emotional, and social effects. By focusing on their abilities rather than limitations, these professionals can help seniors regain independence and confidence. Furthermore, occupational therapy can assist elderly individuals in enhancing their organizational skills and learning how to independently organize things. OTs may also provide support for home modifications to help older people maintain their independence. OTs play a crucial role in aiding seniors with arthritis and vision impairment to enhance their daily task performance. By assessing the specific conditions of arthritis and vision loss in seniors, OTs devise strategies to enhance task execution. Each session commences with occupational therapists guiding patients in enhancing their proficiency in daily activities. This is the main goal of every session. In addition to enhancing independence in daily activities, occupational therapy services focus on providing training to improve skills and increase strength and quality of life. Older adults can benefit from the assistance provided by OTs. Development of basic motor skills involves more than just movement, it also involves strength, physical changes, and muscle flexibility. As people age, they often experience a decline in muscle strength, which can be improved with regular exercise.

Therefore, OTs work to enhance fine motor skills in elderly patients. They help them with regular exercise and enable them to carry out basic everyday tasks that involve muscle movement. Occupational therapy can also help older individuals lead happier lives by reducing chronic pain and keeping their

muscles active to prevent falls. By helping patients adapt to physical, mental, and social changes that come with aging, OTs assist them in staying engaged with the world around them. As elderly patients age, they may experience various physical and mental health challenges, such as forgetfulness and decreased sensory stimulation. Occupational therapy can aid in improving their cognitive skills.

OTs can also help improve the emotional well-being of senior adults who may be vulnerable to physical, emotional, and social effects. By focusing on their abilities rather than limitations, these professionals can help seniors regain independence and confidence. Furthermore, occupational therapy can assist elderly individuals in enhancing their organizational skills and learning how to independently organize things. OTs may also provide support for home modifications to help older people maintain their independence. With arthritis and vision loss being common issues among seniors, OTs can help these patients perform daily tasks more effectively. By understanding the type of arthritis and vision loss a senior has, OTs can develop solutions to improve they describe who we are and how we feel about ourselves.

In situations where injury, illness, disability, or socio-environmental factors hinder our engagement in daily tasks, OTs step in to devise strategies that enable us to navigate our day-to-day lives meaningfully. By offering solutions that circumvent or adapt to these challenges, occupational therapy plays a pivotal role in preventing the onset or worsening of disabilities and illnesses. Furthermore, it enriches our involvement within our communities and personal lives, fostering a fuller participation in the essence of living [6, 7].

### **Why is Older Adult Health so Important?**

The elderly population is expanding rapidly, with approximately 5 million individuals aged 65 and above, as per Canadian demographic data. Most older adults reside in private homes and typically rate their health as excellent or very good. Nevertheless, the prevalence of chronic conditions rises with age, and about one out of every ten individuals aged 75 or older needs help with fundamental daily tasks. Within communities, older adults fulfill vital functions such as volunteering, employment, passing down wisdom, and providing care.

## **DISCUSSION**

This review article explores the latest developments, methodologies, and evidence-based interventions within the field of geriatric occupational therapy, aiming to provide practitioners, researchers, and policymakers with an insightful overview. The discussion begins by outlining the demographic shift towards an increasingly aged population worldwide, emphasizing the growing demand for specialized healthcare services to address the diverse challenges faced by older adults. It highlights the pivotal role of occupational therapy in promoting health, independence, and quality of life among older individuals, focusing on enhancing their ability to engage in meaningful daily activities. The article delves into the various domains of geriatric occupational therapy, including physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and environmental factors, underscoring the holistic approach adopted by practitioners to address multifaceted needs. It examines emerging trends in assessment tools, intervention strategies, and technology-enabled solutions aimed at optimizing functional outcomes and promoting successful aging. Furthermore, the review explores the evidence base supporting the efficacy and effectiveness of different occupational therapy interventions in improving functional status, preventing disability, and enhancing overall well-being among older adults. It synthesizes findings from recent studies, meta-analyses, and systematic reviews to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge in the field. Moreover, the discussion addresses challenges and barriers encountered in the delivery of geriatric occupational therapy services, such as limited access to care, workforce shortages, and reimbursement issues. It underscores the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, professional development, and advocacy efforts in overcoming these obstacles and advancing the quality of care provided to older adults [8–10].

---

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, “Advancements in Geriatric Occupational Therapy: A Comprehensive Review” underscores the critical role of occupational therapy in promoting healthy aging and improving outcomes for older individuals. By synthesizing the latest research and best practices, this review article serves as a valuable resource for enhancing geriatric care delivery and shaping future directions in the field of occupational therapy.

**REFERENCES**

1. Boop C., Cahill SM., Davis C., Dorsey J., Gibbs V., Herr B. Occupational Therapy Practice Framework: Domain and Process-Fourth Edition. *Am J Occup Ther.* 2020;74(2): 1–85p. doi: 10.5014/ajot.2020.74S2001.
2. Jackson J, Carlson M, Mandel D, Zemke R, Clark F. Occupation in lifestyle redesign: the well elderly study occupational therapy program. *Am J Occup Ther.* 1998; 52(5): 326–36p. doi: 10.5014/ajot.52.5.326.
3. Brach JS, Vanswearingen JM. Interventions to Improve Walking in Older Adults. *Curr Transl Geriatr Exp Gerontol Rep.* 2013; 2(4): 230–238p. doi: 10.1007/s13670-013-0059-0.
4. Kaelin VC, Ray-Kaesler S, Moioli S, Kocher Stalder C, Santinelli L, Echsel A, Schulze C. Occupational Therapy Practice in Mainstream Schools: Results from an Online Survey in Switzerland. *Occup Ther Int.* 2019; 2019. doi: 10.1155/2019/3647397.
5. Hocking, C., Whiteford, G. Occupation: The essential nexus of occupational therapy practice. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal.* 2012; 59(6): 384–386p. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1630.2012.01035.x>
6. Kielhofner, G. *Model of Human Occupation: Theory and Application.* Baltimore: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2008.
7. Law M, Baptiste S, McColl M, Opzoomer A, Polatajko H, Pollock N. The Canadian occupational performance measure: an outcome measure for occupational therapy. *Can J Occup Ther.* 1990; 57(2): 82–87p. doi: 10.1177/000841749005700207.
8. Rao AK. Occupational therapy in neurological disorders: Looking ahead to the American Occupational Therapy Association’s centennial vision. *Am J Occup Ther.* 2012; 66(6): e119–e130p. doi: 10.5014/ajot.2012.005280.
9. Lohman H., Byers-Connon S., Padilla R.. *Occupational Therapy with Elders: Strategies for the COTA.* Toronto: Mosby; 2016.
10. Trombly CA, Ma HI. A synthesis of the effects of occupational therapy for persons with stroke, Part I: Restoration of roles, tasks, and activities. *Am J Occup Ther.* 2002; 56(3): 250–259p. doi: 10.5014/ajot.56.3.250.