POSITION STATEMENT

Activities of Daily Living

Introductory statement of purpose of paper

The purpose of this paper is to state the WFOT's position on how Activities of Daily Living (ADL) relate to occupational therapy's scope of practice.

ADL is a subset of human occupation. Occupation refers to all everyday activities people do as individuals, in families, as members of groups, and within communities, to bring meaning and purpose to life and to achieve and maintain health.

Statement of position being taken

The World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT) affirms that occupational therapists are experts in relation to Activities of Daily Living and that they adopt a holistic approach when applying specific skills, with various clients in different settings, including home/work/leisure contexts, with the aim of enhancing client's performance of and engagement in their activities of daily living.

Statement of the significance of position to Occupational Therapy

This position statement is significant to occupational therapy as it emphasizes that the primary focus of occupational therapy is occupation, which includes (but is not limited to) activities of daily living, and recognizes a particular and important area of occupational therapists' expertise.

Statement of significance of position to the society

This statement highlights the unique contribution that occupational therapy's focus on everyday living can make to the promotion of health and well being of individuals, groups, and communities.

Substantiating rationale for the position

Occupational therapists are considered experts in occupation and, by extension, experts in ADL because:

- their profession of occupational therapy is primarily concerned with promoting occupational performance and engagement for health and well being
- they have specific education in the use of assessments and interventions to enable individuals, with or without impairments, to participate in the everyday occupations of living, including Activities of Daily Living
- they bring client-centred and holistic approaches to practice in that they acknowledge the needs of the client, the complexity of ADL and the relevance of context

Challenges and strategies

Different understandings and uses of the terms occupation and ADL, in various health care practice settings and contexts can create challenges. ADL is categorized by some according to

purpose, such as self care, productivity and leisure. For some it is described as self care activities, i.e. "activities that are oriented toward taking care of one's own body"[1] and for others the associated term Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs) is adopted to refer to "activities that are orientated toward interacting with the environment and are often complex in nature"[1]

To address such challenges, it is important for occupational therapists to:

- use occupation-focused language in all verbal and written communications
- use every opportunity to promote their unique focus on occupation and explain why their ADL skills may be appropriate, and
- remain client–centred, and apply ADL skills as determined by the needs and goals of the client

Conclusion

As experts in Activities of Daily Living, occupational therapists can play an important role in enabling clients to perform and engage in those occupations that are personally meaningful and foster participation. The extent to which occupational therapists are involved in enabling clients to perform and engage in ADL is dependent on practice setting and the needs of the client.

References

[1] James, A. B. (2009). Activities of daily living and instrumental activities of daily living. In E. Crepeau, E. Cohn & B. Boyt Schell, *Willard & Spackman's Occupational Therapy* 11th ed. (pp.538-578). Baltimore MD: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.