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Critically Appraised Topic: Impact of Occupation-Based Interventions on Older Adults in Skilled Nursing Facilities Experiencing Occupational Deprivation

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Focused Question

How do occupation-based interventions and client-centered interventions impact occupational performance in older adults who are experiencing occupational deprivation in skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) receiving occupational therapy (OT) services?

Case Scenario

Occupational therapy (OT) is “the only profession that helps people across the lifespan to do the things they want and need to do through the therapeutic use of daily activities (occupations). OT practitioners enable people of all ages to live life to its fullest by helping them promote health, and prevent—or live better with—injury, illness, or disability” (AOTA, 2020 p. S1) OT practitioners use meaningful occupations to promote health and a better lifestyle for people with injury, illness, or disability in all stages of life. OT practitioners use evidence-based practice, look at the environment and the task and make the best fit to the person while keeping the person at the center of the practice. Evaluations are the first step to determine the client’s goals and then a reevaluation is used to make sure that the goals are being met (AOTA, 2020).

A core concept of OT as a practice is the idea that life is made meaningful by the engagement of meaningful occupations. Therefore, when therapists are providing intervention services, the main goal of those services is to enable the individual to improve their quality of life through the use of occupations. The way in which this is done is through occupation-based interventions; the American Occupational Therapy Association defines these interventions as activities that support performance in any of the areas of occupation such as activities of daily living, instrumental activities of daily of living, leisure, rest/sleep, social participation, education, work, and play (AOTA, 2014). Through the use of occupation-based intervention, the chances of the individual being more engaged in therapy and therefore being successful in reaching goals, is higher than simply using rote exercises that serve no personal meaning to the individual.

The model being used for this study is Person-Environment-Occupation or PEO. This model focuses on the interaction or as this model states the “transactions” between the person, their environment, and their occupations. These three areas all interact with one another, these transactions can be looked at by the occupational therapist to find what is referred to as the “best of fit” for a person to help facilitate optimal occupational performance (Baptiste, 2017).

Occupational deprivation is a concept that is used to describe the state of not engaging in meaningful occupations that an individual is not in immediate control of. Specifically, prevention from engagement in occupations that are necessary or add value to the individual’s life due to factors that are outside immediate control of the individual (Whiteford, 2000). This is the most recent operational definition of occupational deprivation as the concept was first introduced by Wilcock in 1998. Since then, there has been little research done regarding changing the definition of this concept of occupational deprivation. Rather, the research that has been emerging in recent years has kept this original definition and instead focused on looking at the prevalence and impact that occupational deprivation can have on both individuals and populations (Whiteford, 2000).



In skilled nursing facilities (SNFs), OTs address activities of daily living (ADLs) within a new environment and assist clients in learning how to use adaptive equipment and environmental modifications to promote well-being and participation in meaningful occupations (AOTA, 2015). Occupational therapists who work in SNFs can be utilized by assisting clients in finding strengths and deficits associated with occupational performance and clients are then able to engage in meaningful occupations rather than occupational deprivation.

Approximately 1.3 million adults reside in skilled nursing facilities throughout the United States (Rothwell et al., 2019). Most of these individuals need assistance in one or more activities of daily living (ADL's) which can result in occupational deprivation. Activities of daily living (ADL's) are defined as "activities oriented toward taking care of one's own body". Some examples of ADL's are dressing, bathing, feeding, and toileting (Rogers & Holm, 1994, as cited in AOTA, 2014, p. S19).

Many older adults live in SNFs. Currently, the population of older adults living in SNFs is experiencing occupational deprivation on a large scale. Based on information from the *Physical and Occupational Therapy in Geriatrics Journal*, one of the cornerstone causes for occupational deprivation is a lack of continuity between what the older adults enjoyed doing prior to living in a SNFs and what they are able to do while living in a SNFs (Causey-Upton, 2015). This gap between what is offered for older adults to participate in versus what they previously enjoyed doing causes occupational deprivation in this population which ultimately reduces their quality of life while living in these facilities. As most of these adults receive OT services while residing in SNFs, it is important to keep intervention occupation-based so that the individuals experiencing occupational deprivation for the reasons mentioned prior, are able to engage in meaningful activities and therefore improve their overall quality of life (Causey-Upton, 2015).

Purpose Statement

Based on the information gathered above, occupational deprivation is an increasing issue for older adults living in skilled nursing facilities. The research that currently exists on this topic is thorough, but limited. Therefore, there is a clear need to analyze the connection between how occupation-based interventions can provide occupational justice and how quality of life for older adults living in skilled nursing facilities is improved by engaging in meaningful occupations.

Methodology

In order to find existing literature, several databases were utilized to find research articles relating to this topic. For information regarding occupation-based intervention, Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) and Pubmed provided several articles when using the search parameters based on the Boolean phrase "(occupation-based interventions) AND (older adults)." This provided many articles relating to the benefits of occupation-based interventions specifically related to older adults. Articles that were not relevant to the entirety of the search parameters were excluded as well as articles that were outdated by 10 years or more. Through more thorough analysis of the articles found within the searches of these two databases,



the articles that were extensively summarized included topics that directly showed evidence relating to how occupation-based intervention is a benefit to older adults specifically living in skilled nursing facilities.

The search for appropriate and useful information began at the UND Med Library where we utilized CINAHL and PsycINFO. We used CINAHL to gather articles based on a variety of different professions. PsycINFO is a database mainly focusing on psychology. We chose this to assist with research on whether or not psychological impairments were happening with occupational deprivation. Furthermore, we searched through the American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT). This journal is a peer reviewed occupational therapy publication published by American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA). We discovered that the articles that focused on OT provided the most useful information. This led to questioning why some meaningful occupations were not being used. We excluded articles that focused on other professions within SNFs, as well as any that did not apply to the client centered occupations or the overuse of rote exercise.

When searching for existing literature regarding occupational deprivation, the databases CINAHL and Google Scholar were used to find all relevant literature. Search terms used include “occupational deprivation”, “occupational engagement”, “skilled nursing facilities”, “occupational therapy”, “occupational justice”, and “older adults”. These key terms were searched with a variety of combinations to yield the articles used. The articles found were relevant to the desired literature relating occupational deprivation to older adults in skilled nursing facilities. The articles used were published within the last 5 years showing the recency and a need for further literature published in this area of occupational therapy. Based on the articles that were derived from the aforementioned search terms, those articles which were not relevant to the focused population and problem area related to the topic of occupational deprivation in skilled nursing facilities, were discarded. Ultimately, this allowed for 12 articles to be reviewed more in depth to analyze the existing information regarding this topic. The articles reviewed were a mixture of quantitative and qualitative studies.

Total number of articles reviewed	12
Types of articles reviewed	Seven level I articles Two level II articles One level IV article One NA article One continuing education article



Summary of Key Findings

For older adults who are living in skilled nursing facilities, it is frequently observed that these individuals have a decreased quality of life because of the lack of engagement in meaningful occupations. This is often exacerbated by the fact that many individuals residing in SNFs and receiving OT services are not completing occupation-based interventions even though there is significant evidence showing the positive benefits of occupation-based interventions specifically with this population. A randomized control trial published in the *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy* found that occupation-centered interventions significantly improved older individual's perceptions of their occupational performance as compared to rote exercises in therapy (Nielsen, 2018). However, this study solely used the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) as a measure of satisfaction with their own performance which means that the results of this study cannot relate to the individual's actual performance (Nielsen, 2018).

The use of occupation-based interventions to combat occupational deprivation suggests how highly impacted the clients in institutional settings are (Whiteford, Jones, Weekes, Ndlovu, Long, Perkes, & Brindle, 2018). The methodology used by Whiteford et al. (2018) is a practice-based enquiry as the researcher is also being researched in order to build these conclusions. The data collection process used observation of everyday actions done by the therapist and written information from clients (Whiteford et al., 2018). The findings of this study suggests the implementation of occupation-based intervention as a means to fight occupational deprivation in SNF's. The main limitation that came from this study was the issues of finding occupation-based interventions for individual clients.

A systematic review published in the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* found results suggesting that there is limited to moderate evidence in support of stating the effectiveness of occupation-based interventions in improving IADL performance in older adults (Orellano, 2012). This lack of evidence is hypothesized to be due to a lack of studies specifically regarding the correlation between performance of IADLs in this population and occupation-based interventions (Orellano, 2012). Additionally, this systematic review is the most up-to-date information synthesizing the existing literature regarding this topic, and it is currently eight years old making it relatively outdated. The author of a more recent systematic review studied a similar topic but instead of focusing on IADLs, the focus of the study was on social participation and leisure engagements of older adults living in SNFs (Smallfield, 2018). The findings of this review indicated that there were many options for interventions that have been shown to improve the quality of life for individuals specifically relating to leisure engagement and social participation in older adults residing in SNFs (Smallfield, 2018). However, one major flaw discussed by this reviewer was that there were various different measures of quality of life used in the studies mentioned (Smallfield, 2018). This suggests that there would be a lack of continuity regarding making a claim that quality of life is improved by occupation-based interventions that focus specifically on leisure engagement and social participation (Smallfield, 2018). Additionally, a continuing education article from the *American Occupational Therapy Association* mentioned several barriers that are preventing occupation-centered interventions in



SNFs. For example, this article asserts that the main barriers are time constraints, motivation and physical capacity of clients, and lack of resources (Reynolds, 2019). Although Reynolds suggests potential solutions, there has not been any follow up research conducted to determine if these solutions are effective in obtaining the desired outcome (Reynolds, 2019). Overall, there is a large gap regarding extensive research specifically studying the positive impact that occupation-based intervention can have on older adults.

A qualitative study found used a single interview conducted by an occupational therapist in a skilled nursing facility. The results display the positive effects on an individual using occupation-based interventions to improve quality of life and decrease occupational deprivation (Sabres & Guzman, 2016).

Several studies reviewed discussed the use of a model to help combat occupational deprivation through the use of occupational engagement. The Environment-Health-Occupation-Well-Being (E-HOW) Model was created to guide occupational therapy practice that focuses on quality of life improvements as an outcome of the model. There is also a call for a paradigm shift in the field of OT to switch the focus to quality of life as an outcome. The E-HOW model works towards the growing issue of occupational deprivation and how to combat it. This stems from clients not being provided with occupation-based, client-centered interventions (Pizzi & Richards, 2017). Using the E-HOW model guided the making of a product to help practitioners utilize leisure-based interventions in the form of a manual and an education program for proper use of the manual (Mayasich & Tyce, 2019). A systematic review of existing literature showed that around 50% of people in skilled nursing facilities experience depression and occupational deprivation (Mayasich & Tyce, 2019). Both studies that used the E-HOW model were published within the last 5 years, showing its recency and growing importance in the profession of OT. Some limitations of the E-HOW model and the product produced from it include the lack of knowing how effective the program would be, buy-in from facilities being required and the possible denial of insurance as a payment method. A limitation to both studies using the E-HOW model is that it is a relatively new model with little research to support it.

The use of occupation-based interventions is important in SNFs and individuals in the facility may lack the opportunity or the resources to engage in occupations to promote health and well-being. Instead, many facilities have turned to using rote exercises rather than client-centered occupations. A retrospective and cross-sectional design was used to quantitatively compare the differences in individuals' engagement in activities before coming to the facility and what their occupational engagement looks like now inside of the facility. This study looks at how the SNFs are handling occupational deprivation and if they are promoting occupational engagement as people are adapting to a new environment. The findings of this study were that the participation in activities had declined once a resident had moved into the SNFs. This has been deemed to be the case because SNFs make it more difficult to reflect in terms of physical and cognitive differences between residents. This study could be a starting point to show the effect a new environment has on activity participation in SNFs (Uemura, Hoshino, Igarashi, & Nishio, 2018).



In a randomized control trial, a semi-structured interview was done to determine perceptions of OTs and clients when it comes to occupation-based interventions to see if they were maintaining an equal balance of occupation-based interventions among the different facilities (Maitra & Erway, 2014). The methodology of the study by Maitra & Erway (2014) was that all participants within this study were kept blind to the purpose of the study and medical charts were reviewed to decide validity. The findings of this study show that there is a gap between OTs and their clients and on their views of the meaning of client-centered practice.

A literature review by Causey-Upton (2015), shows strong evidence that using a model called the occupational justice theory would help to improve the health and well-being of older adults in SNFs by looking deeper into leisure activities that they can participate in. This is one way that OTs would be able to introduce occupation-based intervention within SNFs. However, this would take time to implement as OTs and other professions would need to be educated on how to use the occupational justice theory and to make sure everyone is familiar with the same terminology. A conceptual model is introduced, Model of Leisure Engagement for Quality of Life in Nursing Home Residents (LEQoL-NH). Principles of occupational justice, continuing theory, leisure engagement and resulting quality of life are the four factors that are looked at within this model. Occupational injustices need to be looked at by assessing physical environments to see if there could be an adjustment that needs to be made to help promote occupational engagement. The findings are that occupational injustices are shown in SNFs due to the lack of activities planned for leisure engagement (Causey-Upton, 2015).

In a prospective observational mixed methods study, identifying occupation-based interventions that could be implemented within SNFs to help people engage in meaningful occupations was looked at (Jewell, Pickens, Hersch & Jensen, 2016). The methodology used by Jewell et al. (2016) was with the use of a quantitative, descriptive approach, it gives the opportunity to look at two occupational therapists and three SNF clients to see what officially happens in clinical practice. An assessment called Occupation-Centered Intervention Assessment (OCIA) was used in this study. This assessment tool focused on occupation and adaptation and ranked occupation-based interventions when looking at the personal, contextual, and occupational relevance. The findings of this article showed interventions that can be provided to older adults within SNFs using the OCIA to rank the level of occupation-based practices. There is strong evidence that the exercise/rote practice category was deemed the most heavily used approach and therapy is highly focused on interventions that do not focus on occupations.

Clinical Bottom Line

Focused Clinical Question Revisited

The research question that guided this topic was how do occupation-based interventions and client-centered interventions impact occupational performance in older adults who are experiencing occupational deprivation in skilled nursing facilities (SNFs) receiving occupational therapy (OT) services? Based on the research that has been conducted previously, there is strong evidence that supports the use of occupation-based, client-centered interventions to combat occupational deprivation in older adults in SNFs. Occupational deprivation is clearly a prevalent



issue within SNFs, and this leads to a decreased quality of life for those impacted. Additionally, there is sufficient evidence supporting the notion that rote exercise has a tendency to be overused by occupational therapists when compared to the use of occupation-based intervention. The primary population that is affected by this issue is older adults. Older adults who are dwelling in skilled nursing facilities account for approximately 1.3 million Americans (Rothwell et al., 2019). With this increasing population, there is a clear need to determine ways to combat occupational deprivation in these settings.

Further Research Necessary

However, the extent of the knowledge available regarding ways that occupational deprivation can be combated through the use of occupation-based interventions is insufficient. A continuing education article from the American Occupational Therapy Association suggests multiple barriers to using occupation-based interventions and potential solutions to those barriers mainly centered around the idea of simply making time in the resident's schedules for active participation in meaningful tasks and incorporating that time for therapy services rather than having therapy as its own separate activity (Reynolds, 2019). However, there is no explicit research or evidence regarding implementation of those solutions as of now. As occupational therapists, using models with little research to guide practice may be ineffective. With evidence-based practice implemented by OT practitioners, working to combat occupational deprivation in SNFs with occupation-based interventions can help to fill gaps in the literature. Documenting the progress and effectiveness of these interventions can help to progress occupational science to better understand the benefits of occupation-based interventions.

Usefulness in Practice and Relevance to Stakeholders

Due to the large number of older adults residing in skilled nursing facilities, combined with the fact that the aforementioned number is expected to increase, there is a clear need to make certain that the quality of life for those individuals living in SNFs is as positive as possible. This is crucial to maintaining concern for humanity and well-being of those who reside within these facilities and are receiving therapy services. Additionally, as occupational therapists is it one of the core values of the practice itself to maintain delivery of a service that is unique in the sense that it is truly client-centered and based on the idea of increasing the quality of life for clients. Therefore, it is essential to continue to strive to minimize rote-exercises and maximize participation in meaningful occupations through the use of occupation-based interventions. Through striving for this ideal, the quality of life for those individuals who reside in SNFs will be increased. Subsequently, the impact that the distinct value of occupational therapy has on the individual will be better understood by a greater population.

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