

Introduction and Background

Occupational Therapy Australia is the professional association for occupational therapists. Our members are qualified occupational therapists employed throughout the public and private sectors. They provide health care, vocational rehabilitation and consultancy to clients.

Our mission is to provide member benefits through access to local professional support and resources and through opportunities to contribute to, and shape, professional excellence.

We support our members by providing high-quality, relevant, equitable services focused on their needs. We aim to develop and maintain excellence across the scope of professional occupational therapy practice. We do this by conducting courses, workshops and seminars throughout the year to help members maintain and continue their professional development.

The Association represents in excess of 1200 Queensland Occupational Therapists and over 5000 members nationally. This paper is prepared by the Queensland Division of Occupational Therapy Australia.

Effectiveness, efficiency and adequacy of palliative care and HACC services

Occupational therapy Australia recognises that the following short comings in palliative care and HACC services:

- Inconsistent eligibility for services
- More pronounced inconsistent eligibility for services in rural and remote areas
- Large delays in funding outcomes
- No guarantee what services will be available
- No accessible database to find out what services and equipment is provided from region to region
- No KPI's for urgent equipment requests
- No central electronic database

Occupational therapists are trained in palliative care as part of their undergraduate degree. Occupational therapists' are central to promoting quality of life and have a core holistic outlook in client care.

Dr Luxford from Palliative Care Australia Inc. states: *“Essentially what we are trying to promote here is the idea that palliative care is about life – the proper care of someone who still has days, months or years left, and to focus on improving the quality of the time they have left by ensuring comfort, dignity and freedom from pain.”*

Occupational Therapy Australia recommends the following to provide, effective, proficient and adequate palliative care and HACC services:

- Singular eligibility system
- Better publicity of packages available
- Criteria developed for HACC service providers
- Consistent equipment loaning services
- More specific definitions

Improving integration, collaboration and cooperation between palliative care, HACC, disability services and other health services

Occupational Therapy Australia support greater use of multi disciplinary teams, as with continual training of the allied health professional sector in relation to palliative care, occupational therapists are well positioned to be case managers within the community. At an undergraduate level, occupational therapists are trained to consider individuals holistically by considering the person, their environment and their occupations. Occupational therapists currently work in case management roles within communities and within industry. Occupational therapists are great change agents and adaptable with change. The Association further recommends that better communication strategies are established with services provided by General Practitioners.

Evidence demonstrates that occupational therapy promotes independence as referenced in many research articles. Jackson, Carlson Mabel et. al (1998) state that “the results of the Well Elderly Treatment Program demonstrate that occupational therapists can importantly contribute to preventative health care through their focus on benefits of occupation. Success of the Well Elderly Treatment Program has potential important implications for the health industry: Occupational therapy programs such as this may in the long term reduce morbidity and the effects of disability”.

Occupational Therapy Australia recommends the following to improve integration, collaboration and cooperation between palliative care, HACC, disability services and other health services:

- Increased number of occupational therapists involved in palliative care and HACC services
- Occupational therapists to be preferred as Case Managers within the services.

- Fast and efficient referral process established.
- Development of an equipment pool and fast efficient access to these resources
- The system established has an inbuilt timeframes where by urgent requests can be guaranteed
- Published database on Medicare locals' websites with links provided
- E Health records link system established with technology so OTs and other allied health providers can update immediately whilst in the client's home

Segmentation of the HACCC system

Occupational Therapy Australia opposes the concept of segmentation of the HACCC system based on age, and strongly recommends the integration of services for continuity of care. This improves efficiency and has better economic value and value for the consumer.

Proposed National Disability Insurance Scheme

Occupational Therapy Australia welcome the NDIS and Occupational Therapists have been greatly affected when our clients have been unable to access services or resources that would enable enhanced independence and engagement in the community.

We are also delighted to see that the NDIS is championing service values that are at the heart of OT practice: Creating the conditions for people with disabilities to access the support they need to exercise real lifestyle choice and to live with dignity, equality and respect in the community.

References

Luxford, L. (2012) A New Vision for palliative care in Australia. *Palliative Care Australia – media release*. www.palliativecare.org.au

Jackson , J., Carlson, M., Mandel, D., Zemeke, R. & Clark, F. (1998) Occupation in Lifestyle Redesign: The Lifestyle Well Elderly Study Occupational Therapy Program. *The American Journal of Occupational Therapy* 52(p326-336)