



SRI LANKA SOCIETY OF OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

(Full Member of World Federation of Occupational Therapists)

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Dear Members/colleagues,

Role of Occupational Therapist during the outbreak of Coronavirus (COVID- 19)

The COVID- 19 pandemic is engulfing the world rapidly. The pandemic is causing a profound impact on the lives, health, and wellbeing of persons including our patients, families, and communities, and many occupational therapists are struggling with the question, “what is the appropriate role of occupational therapist during this period?”

Sri Lanka Society of Occupational Therapists’ priority is to facilitate information sharing, guidance, and advocacy to equip occupational therapists in the country to navigate through such complex situations. While we do not have immediate answers to every question arising in this period, we would like to consider occupational therapy services as essential because occupational therapists play a key role in developing the client’s care plans and often be the reason a client is receiving care in certain settings.

Client care:

Delays in rehabilitation have been associated with worsening symptoms and adverse effects for children, adolescents, and adults. Therefore, occupational therapists may consider the role of occupational therapy in:

1. Reducing the likelihood of hospitalization or readmission of client by regular therapy and guidance.
2. Decreasing the likelihood of complications such as contractures and joint deformities.
3. Improving resistance to infection via movement and activities which have proven to enhance immunity.
4. Combatting disruptions to the mood of both clients, family and the general population as a result of social isolation.
5. Addressing clients’ occupational deprivation and establishing habits, roles, and routines.
6. Promoting participation in education, play, and learning in the home or school; and
7. Increasing independence in occupations, thereby reducing the need for caregivers to be in close proximity to clients.

Occupational therapist’s safety:

Access to personal protective equipment (PPE) may be limited during this emergency, but it is important to follow the safety regulations for infection control. Occupational therapists are advised to adhere to the social distancing regulations imposed by the government as well.

Occupational therapists have a critical role in conducting home visits and are also should be competent in infection control procedures and other regulations across settings. Occupational therapists also need access to PPE for the safety of their clients and themselves to avoid further spread of the virus.

Continuity of service:

Regardless of the setting, there may be long-term negative physical, cognitive, and psychosocial effects for clients who do not receive the therapy they need.

But in this unprecedented time, many factors will affect care delivery, such as population, geographic location, staff availability, etc. Some therapy may need to be suspended or modified based on the client. Therapists may be advised not to go to multiple buildings in one day. Besides, therapists in some facilities may be asked to provide additional public health support activities to meet other clients' basic needs.

If there are interruptions to service that delay continued access to care,

- 1. Review clients' care plans and consider making any updates or modifications that may be necessary to account for client access issues related to COVID- 19.**
- 2. Communicate with clients and their families/caregivers as appropriate to help them understand the situation and assure them that you are doing all that you can to provide (or resume) services; and**
- 3. Ensure documentation of your efforts to adhere to the client's care plan, including all cancellations of visits and all alternative methods used to perform client visits (e.g., phone calls).**

Occupational therapists work in a variety of settings and treat populations that each present a unique challenge. Occupational Therapists should consider professional ethics as they collaborate with clients to determine the best way to meet occupational therapy needs in a way that is as safe as possible for both clients and practitioners.

SLSOT advises its members and other occupational therapists working in the country to follow the WFOT guidelines and the government regulations imposed concerning this pandemic situation.

You may communicate with the Sri Lanka Association of Occupational Therapists (SLAOT) regarding practice matters related to the state service.

We are working hard to provide accurate guidance to our members, and other occupational therapists working in the country. We encourage occupational therapists to make every reasonable effort to meet client needs and avoid interruptions and delays in care while keeping clients and themselves safe and healthy.

Sri Lanka Society of Occupational Therapists