

Primary Care Occupational Therapy: The Value of Access for Patients

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Purpose

1. To describe the full scope of occupational therapists in Primary Health Care in Ontario and the value of access for Ontarians.
2. To present evidence of the benefits of Occupational Therapy for a wide range of patient populations in Primary Care

Background: How Occupational Therapy fits well in Primary Care

- ❖ OTs included in FHTs *since 2010*.
- ❖ **Generalist, Comprehensive** => Improve Function addressing Mental Health, Physical Health, Complex Health
- ❖ **Throughout the life span** => Address all ages and can support transitions through the health system
- ❖ **Physical Health:** OTs provide community based interventions to prevent, habilitate and rehabilitate after any physical injury/illness.
- ❖ **Mental Health:** OTs have been designated as **providers of the controlled act of psychotherapy** in Ontario since 2018. OTs are providing MH therapies including **CBT, Behavioural Activation, Cognitive Assessment, Return to Work assessments and interventions.**
- ❖ In a recent OSOT Survey of 18/67 OTs currently working in Ontario Primary Care (August 2022), results indicate:
 - 53% OTs have 10 + years experience. 55% of referrals seen with 1 months- 88% within 3 months
 - 85% work with **adults and older adults** in Primary Care and 23% work with school aged children (or all ages.)
 - 65% of OTs provide both **individual and group care** in **Clinic, home visits, virtual and in community** to address any issue identified by clients
 - OTs provide comprehensive intervention **using the full scope of practice** to address the **cognitive, emotional, physical and environmental factors** impacting function (eg:moving seamlessly between modalities)
- ❖ Cook and Howe (2003) examined the feasibility of occupational therapists working with individuals with chronic and serious mental illness in primary care. Participation in occupational therapy led to a significant improvement in social functioning, clinical symptoms, and the National Outcomes Scale
- ❖ Richardson and colleagues (2010) conducted a **randomized controlled trial** to examine the impact of occupational and physical therapy for adults with chronic illness at an interprofessional primary care clinic. Patients who received these services in primary care reported increased satisfaction with occupational therapy and physical therapy services and had fewer planned hospital days.
- ❖ Moore (2013) described occupational therapists working as wellness navigators, that is, service providers who guide patients and their families through the health care system and provide support and linkages with community resources.
- ❖ According to 2019 and 2022 Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care data **67 of 184 FHTs and 11 of 101 CHCs have hired OTs.**

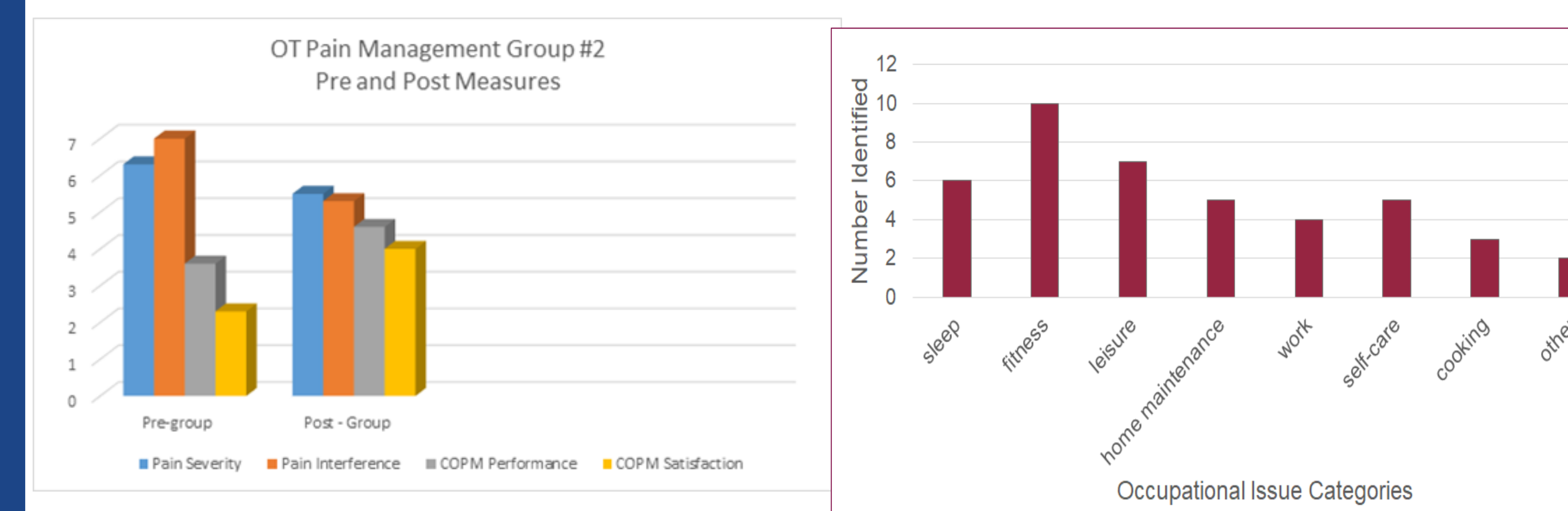
Program Evaluation /Evidence (Examples)

Rural Wellington Low Back Pain program (RCA presentation 2018) Results from Maple FHT / Minto FHT

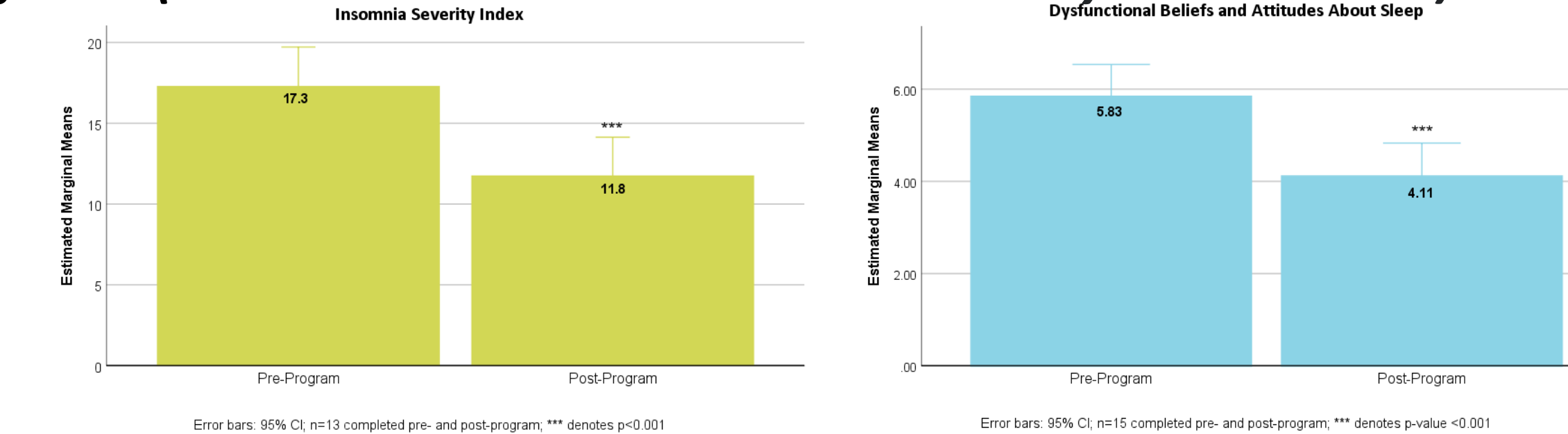
- **Reduction** in perceived disability (PDI) – **82%-86%**
- # of people who demonstrated a **reduction** in physical limitations (OW) – **59% -79%**
- **No change** to disability scores – **OW 23.5% ; PDI = 17.6%**

Lifestyle Management of Chronic Pain (2016 data -McMaster Family Health Team)

- a. Reduced score on BPI
- b. Improved function in multiple areas of life
- c. 100% felt the group was “useful” and 83% reported that the information was helpful to make changes in their life.
- d. 100% reported changes in functioning at home



Sleep CBT-i : Significant Reduction in Insomnia and Dysfunctional Beliefs found (2019 AFHTO Poster- McMaster Family Health Team)



Brain Health Caroline Place and Burlington FHT (Program Evaluation)

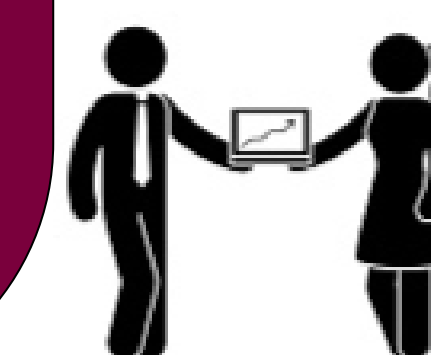
- 1) Percentage of participants that were satisfied, or very satisfied with program **Consistently > 90%**
- 2) Percentage of participants who answered "yes" on survey to having obtained knowledge for promoting brain health and using strategies for daily activities. **Consistently > 90%**

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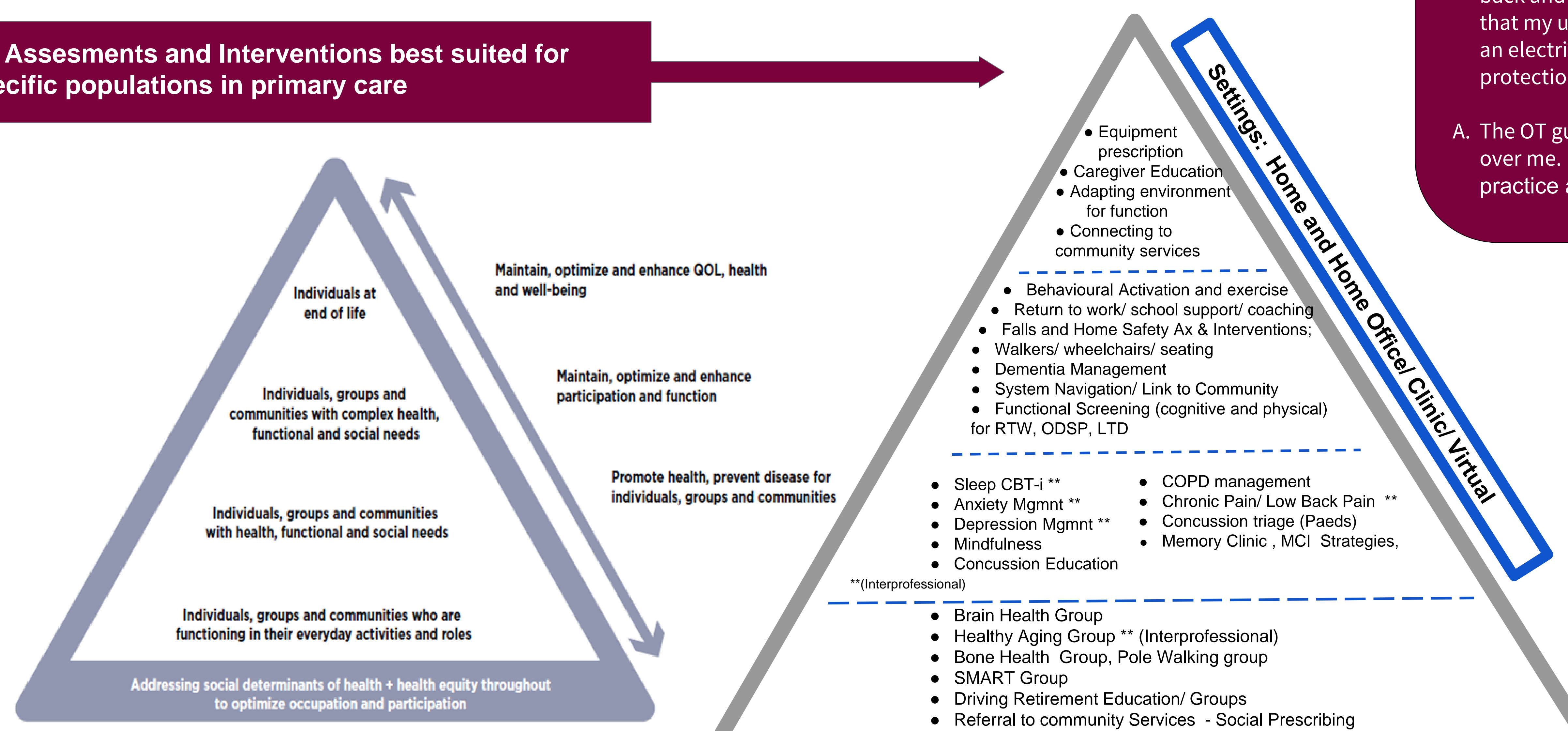
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- OSOT Primary Care Team Survey 2022

Quotes from patients who have receive occupational therapy

- A. “If it weren't for my OT I would still have counters full of dishes, and would still be afraid to even attempt to walk my dog around the block. I now manage my 2 children, the dog and the housekeeping despite my chronic pain...it's not about pushing it, it's about accepting limitations and setting realistic, real-world goals to allow oneself as much of a normal, independent life as possible.”
- A. “ I have been off work as an electrician for over a year due to increased depression, anxiety, lower back and shoulder pain (and) I fatigue easily.The OT helped me to identify from these assessments that my ultimate goal is to get back to work, as this brought a lot of meaning to my life, I loved being an electrician. As a team, the OT and I decided that the CBT-I, pacing, mindfulness, and joint protection strategies may be the first few steps that will enable me to get back to work.”
- A. The OT guided me through my long recovery after hospitalization, and I felt I had an angel watching over me. Pacing and practical tips made the difference” - She gave me the confidence to practice and to try new ideas”



OT Assesments and Interventions best suited for specific populations in primary care



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CONCLUSIONS - Occupational Therapists in Primary Health Care Add Value for clients and the team

- ❖ **Fewer than 50% of FHTs and only 11 of 101 CHCs hire occupational therapists in Ontario and yet this approach is helpful to both clients and teams providing a unique approach reducing disability and improving function and enhancing quality of life for patients.**
- ❖ Occupational Therapists are able to support clients of all ages and conditions to activate and adapt and live their lives to the fullest.
- ❖ Occupational therapists align well with Primary Care models providing care across the lifespan that is comprehensive, longitudinal, coordinated, in team-based primary care settings.
- ❖ OTs use multiple modalities to match client needs addressing physical, cognitive, emotional and environmental deficits

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