

The Role of the Occupational Therapist in Dementia Care



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The term 'dementia' is used to describe symptoms that occur when the brain is affected by a specific condition or disease.

- ❖ Memory
- ❖ Reasoning and Thinking
- ❖ Orientation (place, time and spatial)
- ❖ Comprehension
- ❖ Planning and Initiating
- ❖ Learning Ability
- ❖ Language (Understanding and Spoken)
- ❖ Judgement and Awareness of Safety
- ❖ Behaviour
- ❖ Personality
- ❖ Mood

Occupational Effects of the First Stage

- ❖ Begins gradually with minor changes in memory, usually short term
- ❖ Forgetting conversations, names, events and appointments
- ❖ Minor word finding difficulties and slow to grasp new information
- ❖ Losing items around the home and sometimes accusing people of theft
- ❖ Confusion during sequencing of known tasks e.g. cooking, shopping
- ❖ Judgement and decision making
- ❖ Personality
- ❖ Decreased level of interest in activities previously enjoyed
- ❖ Social withdrawal
- ❖ Anxiety and loss of confidence

Middle Stage

- ❖ Marked changes in ability to sequence and plan daily tasks like washing and dressing
- ❖ Increasingly forgetful of names
- ❖ Increasingly repetitive and recall of information becomes much harder
- ❖ Decrease in recognition of familiar people and objects such as kettles and fridges
- ❖ Disorientation – getting lost in previously known environments
- ❖ Temporal adaptation in ‘time muddling’
- ❖ Hallucinations, visual disturbances and bumping into doorways
- ❖ Communication difficulties receptive and expressive dysphasia
- ❖ Inappropriate behaviour – aggression?
- ❖ Mood swings – tearfulness, fear, sense of being lost

Late Stage

- ❖ Physically frail vs. excessive strength
- ❖ General mobility – weak shuffling gait
- ❖ Nearly complete loss of memory and orientation to time and place
- ❖ Loss of recognition of family members, familiar objects and surroundings
- ❖ Swallowing and eating difficulties
- ❖ Speech difficulties
- ❖ Restlessness, agitation, looking for someone or something
- ❖ Aggression, especially if perceiving a threat

Effects on the Informal Carer

- Spouse, Family Member, Friends

Objective burden – practical difficulties

- ❖ Strain
- ❖ Tiredness, lack of sleep, broken sleep pattern
- ❖ Constantly having to 'do' for the person
- ❖ Fear of 'taking over'
- ❖ Restriction in life
- ❖ Isolation – socially and environmentally

Subjective burden – emotional effect on the care giver

- ❖ Frustration, low morale
- ❖ Sense of loss and grief
 - for the person
 - the planned future
 - relationship they once shared
- ❖ Guilt, resentment and anger
- ❖ Numbness

“Total and complete mental and physical exhaustion”

What can be done?

The OT can become involved in all stages of the disease

The OT uses purposeful activity as a way to assess individual ability and as a method treatment

What people do and how they do it, their strengths and weaknesses are our concerns

Interventions look at:

- ❖ personal Activities of Daily Living
 - Washing, dressing, grooming, toileting, bathing
- ❖ (ADL)
 - Cooking, shopping, home management, money management, daily routine
- ❖ Interests and leisure
- ❖ Home environment
- ❖ Activity in groups and on a one-to-one basis
- ❖ Carer's group and memory groups

Personal Care

Washing, dressing, grooming, toileting and bathing

- ❖ Introduce the activity to the individual and find out how it has been achieved in the past
- ❖ Importance to the person?
- ❖ One instruction at a time
- ❖ Describe and demonstrate the movement if necessary
- ❖ Easily accessible clothing – minimise, fastenings
- ❖ Avoid distractions
- ❖ Try to make the person at ease
- ❖ Encourage personal grooming and use mirrors

Equipment – perching stool, rails, toilet seats, bath seats, transfer ability

Activities of Daily Living

Cooking, shopping, home maintenance, money management, daily routine

Motor Skills –
Balance, co-ordination
R.O.M, dexterity
Manipulation, standing tolerance

Social Skills -
Interpersonal – Language skills,
Communication, eye contact

Intrapersonal – motivation,
Beliefs, self-esteem
Confidence,

Cognitive Skills –
Attention, concentration,
Memory, judgement
Sequencing, problem solving
Decision making
Object recognition, comprehension
Visual perception



Independence

Achievement

Safety and Risk

WHY DO O.T.'S MAKE TEA?

Home Visits

Orientation –
Time, person, place

Safety Awareness and Risk –
Including Road Safety

Perceptual Ability

Social and Environmental Network –
Knowledge of the Local Area

Access

Ability

Aids and Adaptations



Carer and Community Support

Mobility, Transfers and Stamina

Coping skills

Insight and Realistic Attitude

The Importance of Activities

Why?

- ❖ Structures time
- ❖ Engagement with the “doing of” helps to distract from repetitive behaviours
 - ❖ Maintains skills and increases skill level
 - ❖ Gives a sense of purpose and dignity
- ❖ Prevents boredom and may help when dealing with challenging behaviours
 - ❖ Improves relationships and communication
- ❖ Compensates for lost abilities and allows for self-expression

Activity Choice and Approaches

- ❖ Pertinent to individual interests
 - Interest checklist
 - Personal profiling
- ❖ Graded to reflect skill and ability levels
 - “just the right amount of challenge”
- ❖ Focus on enjoyment and participation rather than achievement
- ❖ Consider optimum time of day for the Individual
- ❖ Break tasks into easily achieved components
Parts
- ❖ Use demonstration and support the individual through difficult parts
- ❖ Help with task initiation
- ❖ Encourage creativity and self-expression
- ❖ Let the person know how well they are doing and how much they are needed
- ❖ Competition??

Activity Suggestions...

...Endless

- ❖ Routine day-to-day activities around home/hospital –
making beds, setting tables, folding washing, watering flowers
setting up the tea trolley
- ❖ Cooking – group or singularly
 - whole task or part
 - use the time of year for themed meal
- ❖ Exercise – walking groups
 - exercise groups
 - chair movements to music
 - Tai Chi
- ❖ Listening to music and singing – “Singing for the Brain”
- ❖ Reminiscence – use photos
 - smell boxes
 - life story books
 - lifelines
- ❖ Gardening – planting seeds
 - raised beds
 - indoor gardening, bulbs
- ❖ Outing to places of interest – National Trust homes
 - gardens
 - museums
 - garden centres
 - local cafes

- ❖ Arts and crafts – painting
 - collage
 - papier mâché
 - marbling
 - wet on wet painting
 - decoration and card making
- ❖ Social activities, groups and chatting
- ❖ Reading poems, short stories, newspapers, relaxing

In Conclusion

Occupation is a natural part of daily life for everyone.

People with a dementia have a right to a personally stimulating routine that will help to maintain their skill levels and their self-esteem.

Involvement with various activities helps to relieve boredom and encourages intellectual and physical stimulation.

It can improve, or at least maintain, a sense of well-being.

Individuals can participate and feel that they are giving rather than receiving.

Activity discourages passivity and dependence. It offers a chance for self-expression, decision making, creativity and positive achievement.

What is the site about?	Web Address
Age Concern website	www.ageconcern.co.uk
Alzheimer's Society website	www.alzheimers.org.uk
Devon Community Directory	www.devonline.gov.uk/community
Public Guardian Office (LPA Info)	www.publicguardian.gov.uk
Government Information site	www.direct.gov.uk
Carers UK	www.carersuk.org
Department for Work and Pensions	www.dwp.gov.uk
College of Occupational Therapists website	www.cot.co.uk
Dementia Care Journal Online	www.dementia.careinfo.org
Dementia Voice website	www.dementia-voice.org.uk
Devon County Council website	www.devon.gov.uk
The Department of Health website	www.dh.gov.uk
Mental Health information	www.mentalhealth.org.uk

What is the site about?	Web Address
Mental Health information	www.mind.org.uk
National Institute Mental Health England	www.nimhe.org.uk
Nottingham rehab website	www.nrs-uk.co.uk
Mental Health information	www.psychnet-uk.com
Sainsbury Centre for Mental Health	www.scmh.org.uk
Assistive technology site	www.sensorium.co.uk
Assistive technology site	www.tunstall.co.uk
'Walking to Heath' website	www.whi.org.uk
Expert Patient Programmes	www.expertpatients.co.uk
Home care disability information	www.thiis.co.uk
Food and mood website for mental health	www.foodandmood.org
Activities - A guide for carers	www.alzscot.org