

## **Occupational Therapy's Role in Prevention and Wellness**

### **Improving safety, performance, and function through occupational therapy**

Occupational therapy is a critical service related to the prevention of illness and disability as well as the promotion of wellness. Occupational therapists work with individuals across the life span to address environmental, physical, and behavior issues that can result in disability and illness. Examples of occupational therapy interventions in these areas are: home modifications to reduce the chance of falls; environmental modifications to improve safety and visibility for people with low vision; and task analysis to help people break down complex tasks into smaller, more manageable pieces.

Below is a list of current legislative acts supported by AOTA because they promote safety, healthy lifestyles, and quality services for people with and without disabilities to improve independence and quality of life.

#### **Safety of Seniors Act of 2007 (S. 845)**

Previously the "Keeping Seniors Safe from Falls Act"

This legislation would increase research funding related to falls prevention and require that health professionals be trained in falls prevention techniques that they can share with their patients. Screening techniques used to identify people at high risk for falls would also be improved. Because falls are the leading injury cause of death for people older than 65, AOTA believes this legislation is critical to improving the health and quality of the life of seniors. The bill has passed the Senate and awaits action in the House.

#### **The Stroke Treatment and Ongoing Prevention Act (STOP Stroke) (S.999/H.R.477)**

The STOP Stroke Act would authorize stroke-prevention education initiatives and improve the care of stroke victims by providing additional resources and promoting collaboration among care providers. The bill has passed the House and awaits action in the Senate.

#### **The Arthritis Prevention, Control, and Cure Act (S.626/H.R.1283)**

Arthritis is a common condition that affects the health, independence, and quality of life of nearly 70 million Americans. This legislation would improve public health initiatives and current research of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that is related to arthritis. A secondary aspect of the legislation is that it will direct investigation of the impact of arthritis on workers and the economy.

For more information about the role of occupational therapy in the areas of Wellness and Prevention, please contact the American Occupational Therapy Association's Public Affairs Department at (301) 652-AOTA.