

Occupational Therapy Can Help Reduce Nursing Home Admissions



More than 90% of older adults would prefer to remain home (National Aging in Place Council, 2016), and community-based occupational therapy as part of a small “life changing” team can help them to do so.

A study published in *Health Affairs*, shows that a home-based program using an interprofessional team of an occupational therapist, a registered nurse, and a handyman reduces disability and promotes aging in place (Szanton, Leff, Wolff, Roberts, & Gitlin, 2016).

The program, Community Aging in Place, Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE), funded by the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Innovation, addresses modifications to both the individual and the environment.

A demonstration project of the program had an analytic sample of 234 adults age 65 or older living at home who were dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, and had difficulty with activities of daily living (ADLs). After the 5-month program,

75% had improved performance of ADLs, along with improved symptoms of depression and the ability to complete instrumental ADLs such as shopping and managing medications.

The program demonstrates so much potential that multiple payers (public and private) are adding coverage for CAPABLE. A National Institutes of Health-funded randomized control trial is underway, with results expected in 2018. The Bipartisan Policy Center recognized the program’s potential to save money and improve lives (2016).

“Most people want to stay in their own homes, and aging in place is substantially less expensive than a nursing home or other long-term-care options,” said AOTA Executive Director Fred Somers. “A team of occupational therapy, nursing, and a handyman ensures that each person’s medical, environmental, functional, safety, and psychosocial needs are addressed. This strongly supports value-based care, which should be an essential component of the health care system.”



Bipartisan Policy Center. (2016). *Healthy aging begins at home*. Washington, DC: Author.

National Aging in Place Council. (2016). New online service targets aging-in-place residents. Retrieved from <http://www.ageinplace.org/Practical-Advice/article/New-online-service-targets-aging-in-place-residents3>.

Szanton, S. L., Leff, B., Wolff, J. L., Roberts, L., & Gitlin, L. N. (2016). Home-based care program reduces disability and promotes aging in place. *Health Affairs*, 35, 1558–1563. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2016.0140>