American Occupational Therapy Association

Support the Medicare Home Health Accessibility Act

Establishing occupational therapy (OT) as a Medicare home health qualifying service will help seniors avoid costly interventions.

1 in 4 seniors 65+ has

a fall annually

Total = 29 million falls[1]

3 million
emergency department visits[1]

950,000
hospitalizations or rehab stays[1]

32,000
deaths from fall-related injuries[1]

Economic Cost

The US spends $50 billion annually related to falls.[2]

Cost-Benefit of OT

A recent study indicated home modifications delivered by OT showed potential to avert $442 million in direct medical costs and prevent nearly 1/3 of falls among seniors.[3] Another study found that OT home assessment reduced falls by 40% in high-risk seniors.[4]

Evidence also shows that OT-led home modifications reduced hospital readmissions, saving $22,120 per senior over two years.[5-6]

Further research demonstrates that seniors participating in OT-led home modifications experienced a 30% decrease in disability in basic self-care, as well as reduced depression and pain.[6-7]

Additionally, a 2023 study found that two OT home modification visits were cost-effective to support successful aging at home compared to paid caregiving or institutional care.[8]

Role of OT in the Home: Fall Prevention

To assess physical, behavioral, and environmental factors; provide intervention to reduce fall and injury risk; improve home safety; and maximize function so seniors remain independent in their homes.[9]

1 in 9 seniors 65+ has

Alzheimer's dementia

Total = 6.7 million Americans[10]

32%
seniors with dementia hospitalized annually[10]

18 billion
hours of care provided by informal caregivers[10]

$340 billion
unpaid care provided by informal caregivers[10]

Economic Cost

The US spends $345 billion annually related to dementia.[10]

Cost-Benefit of OT

Evidence shows that an OT-led home support program for seniors with dementia and their informal caregivers: 1) saved $6,667 in annual medical costs, 2) improved seniors' ability to engage in daily activities, and 3) enhanced caregivers' well-being and skills.[11-12] These seniors demonstrated fewer behavioral symptoms, enabling them to live at home longer by reducing triggers for hospital stays, nursing home placements, and excessive medication use.[11]

Other studies indicate that an OT dementia support program delivered in the home increased seniors' daily functioning and reduced caregiver burden by managing challenging behaviors.[13-14]

Analyses of another OT home program for seniors with dementia and their caregivers improved mood, quality of life, and health status of both seniors and their caregivers, saving an average of $2,621 over three months.[15-16]

Role of OT in the Home: Dementia Care

To train caregivers how to adapt daily routines, modify the environment, use effective communication strategies, and handle challenging behaviors when caring for seniors with dementia.[17]

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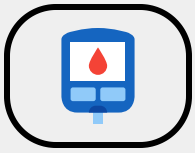
9 in 10 seniors 60+ have

at least 1 chronic condition

Total = 45.6 million Americans[18]

1/3

of deaths are caused by heart disease or stroke (leading cause)[19]



$37 billion

spent annually on complications from type 2 diabetes[20]

41.9%

have obesity, increasing risk for other conditions[21]

Economic Cost

The US spends $4.1 trillion annually related to chronic conditions.[18]

Cost-Benefit of OT

A recent study found that seniors with multiple chronic conditions who participated in an OT-led self-management program saved an average of $2,548 in healthcare costs over 6 months.[22] These seniors also reported improved quality of life and demonstrated increased independence in daily activities.[23]

Research also demonstrates that preventative OT is cost-effective; seniors at high risk for poor health because of disparities showed improved mental well-being after modifying their lifestyles in collaboration with an occupational therapist.[24]

A 2022 review of numerous studies shows that OT interventions focusing on habits and routines are effective in improving the health and quality of life of seniors with chronic conditions or disabilities in a variety of settings, including the home.[25]

Role of OT in the Home: Chronic Conditions

To enable seniors to live healthy, productive lives by addressing social and environmental barriers, increasing awareness of chronic disease through education, enhancing motivation for behavior change, and modifying habits and routines.[26]

1 in 4 seniors 71+ has

low vision or blindness

(after correction)

Total = 8 million Americans[27]

90%

of blindness caused by diabetes is preventable[28]

2x the falls

reported annually by seniors with visual impairment[29]

30%

of seniors with macular degeneration develop depression[30]

Economic Cost

The US spends $134 billion annually related to vision loss.[31]

Cost-Benefit of OT

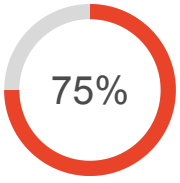
Evidence shows that home-based OT providing low vision rehabilitation and training in adaptive activities increased engagement in daily activities and reduced the incidence of severe depression in high-risk seniors with age-related macular degeneration.[30]

Another study found that an OT home safety program for seniors with severe visual impairment resulted in 41% fewer falls and was more cost-effective than an exercise program even when combined with vitamin D supplementation.[32]

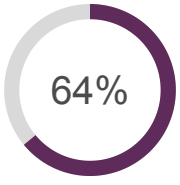
Role of OT in the Home: Low Vision

To assist seniors in modifying daily activities, adapting the environment, managing related comorbidities, and learning new skills--such as assistive technology--to cope with progressive vision loss and prevent accidents and injuries.[33]

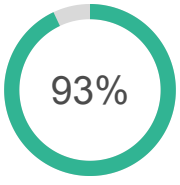
Medicare and Medicaid pay for:



healthcare costs related to falls[2]



healthcare costs related to dementia[10]



healthcare costs related to chronic disease[34]

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