Occupational Therapy and Pain Management

Support Inclusion of Occupational Therapy in Legislation Addressing the Opioid Crisis

Talking Points

- I know that the Senate and House have passed legislation to address the opioids crisis.

- I want to discuss the role of occupational therapy (OT) in addressing pain, as a part of integrated-treatment teams for acute and chronic pain management. Occupational therapy has long been a key part of these teams, especially when it comes to rehabilitation for chronic pain.

- OT focuses on helping individuals participate in desired daily activities that would otherwise be limited because of pain.

- OT can help clients engage (or re-engage in the case of chronic pain) in meaningful and necessary daily activities. This engagement helps to break the cycle of pain leading to decreased activity that in turn increases the perception of pain.

- OT practitioners might teach clients to pace their activities so they have enough energy or are pain free for what is most important to them.

- OT practitioners may teach safe body mechanics or do ergonomic assessments, teach muscle tension reduction training, and proactive problem solve with clients to address chronic pain.

- OT is a necessary and core component of any comprehensive, non-pharmacological pain program.

- The House-passed Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment (SUPPORT) Act (HR 6) includes key provisions to:
  - Reduce opioids in acute care settings
  - Promote payment for evidence-based, non-pharmacological treatments for pain under Medicare.

- The Senate-passed SUPPORT Act (HR 6) includes key provisions to:
  - Help states adopt better Medicaid coverage for non-opioid treatments for pain
  - Reduce opioid use in acute care settings
  - Improve pain management training for health professionals to include non-pharmacological alternatives.

- We urge Congress to pass these and other important bills to address the current opioid crisis before the end of the year, and to include OT in future strategies for acute and chronic pain management programs.

Key Points:

- OT is an important component of non-pharmacological treatment for pain.

- We support language being considered by Congress to expand access to non-pharmacological alternatives for pain treatments included in the House & Senate SUPPORT Acts.

- Please pass this legislation into law before the end of this Congress.