



October 2023

Aging in Place: Key Occupational Therapy Collaborators

Shivani B. Vij

Valley Health, Winchester Medical Center, VA - USA, shivanivij.ot@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/ojot>



Part of the Occupational Therapy Commons

Recommended Citation

Vij, S. B. (2023). Aging in Place: Key Occupational Therapy Collaborators. *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 11(4), 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.15453/2168-6408.2174>

This document has been accepted for inclusion in The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy by the editors. Free, open access is provided by ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.

Aging in Place: Key Occupational Therapy Collaborators

Keywords

aging in place, home modifications, occupational therapy, quality of life

Cover Page Footnote

The author declares that they have no competing financial, professional, or personal interest that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

Credentials Display

Shivani B. Vij, OTD, OTR/L

Copyright transfer agreements are not obtained by The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy (OJOT). Reprint permission for this Letters to the Editor should be obtained from the corresponding author(s). [Click here](#) to view our open access statement regarding user rights and distribution of this Letters to the Editor.

DOI: 10.15453/2168-6408.2174

In the United States (US), housing infrastructure is usually designed for young, able-bodied adults, and it frequently does not meet the needs of older individuals or people with disabilities. Occupational therapists' unique perspective for assessing and modifying the home environment can promote individuals' quality of life and successful aging in place (Georlee et al., 2020; Stark et al., 2017). In the first issue of Volume 11 (Winter 2023, Article 7) of the *Open Journal of Occupational Therapy* (OJOT), Grasso et al. (2023) explored the impact of the two-visit occupational therapy home modification model on the lives of adults with low-incomes via a quasi-experimental study. This study yielded promising outcomes that two-visit occupational therapy-led home modifications can provide cost-effective services to maximize health, well-being, and quality of life for community-dwelling low-income older adults (Grasso et al., 2023).

The participants of the Grasso et al. (2023) study were attendees of the Rebuilding Together program, a national organization that preserves and revitalizes houses and communities through more than 170 local affiliates nationwide (Rebuilding Together, n.d.). There are several other programs similar to Rebuilding Together that occupational therapists can explore to make homes safer and more accessible and promote successful aging in place. Here is the list of key organizations in promoting Aging in Place.

The Community Aging in Place — Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE)

The Community Aging in Place — Advancing Better Living for Elders (CAPABLE) program provides time-limited in-home support (10 sessions) by an occupational therapist, registered nurse (RN), and handy worker (Johns Hopkins School of Nursing, n.d.). A handy worker is a professional fixer who perform a wide range of general home repairs, including fixing plumbing systems, providing repair guidance, cleaning and remodeling community spaces, and performing repair assessments.

The program uses motivational interviewing, active listening, and coaching communication methods to enable participants to achieve their goals. There are currently more than 40 CAPABLE program sites in 20 states. Similar to a two-visit model in the study by Grasso et al. (2023), occupational therapists, in collaboration with RNs and handy workers, can use this 10-session approach for aging-in-place interventions.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) STEADI (Stopping Elderly Accidental Death and Injury) Initiative offers a coordinated approach to implementing the American and British Geriatrics Societies' Clinical Practice Guidelines for fall prevention by screening patients for fall risk, assessing modifiable risk factors, and intervening to reduce risk by using effective clinical and community strategies (CDC, 2021). Occupational therapy's unique home modification skills combined with the STEADI Program can substantially impact falls, improve health outcomes, and reduce health care expenditures.

The National Council on Aging – Center for Healthy Aging

The National Council on Aging – Center for Healthy Aging (NCOA) leads the National Falls Prevention Resource Center, which supports awareness and educational efforts about falls and promotes evidence-based fall prevention programs and strategies nationwide (NCOA, 2022). They aim to increase public awareness and educate consumers and professionals about the risks of falls and how to prevent falls. Occupational therapists can use NCOA's tools, best practices, and other information on fall prevention and home safety in their clinical practice with older adults.

AARP – Livable Communities and Home Fit Guide

The AARP guide was created to help people live safely and comfortably by enabling where they live to be a “lifelong home,” suitable for themselves and others in their household, no matter a person’s age or life stage (AARP, n.d.). AARP’s 36-page, fully-illustrated guide provides tips and suggestions in this room-by-room guide that are doable regardless of housing type or ownership status. The guide can help individuals and families make their current or future residences “aging-friendly.”

Conclusion

Successful home modification promotes quality of life through active participation in the client’s preferred contexts and environments. Home modifications to enable aging in place are most effective when occupational therapists play a central role on the home modification team. For over 20 years, the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) has actively partnered with several organizations seeking to advance home modification programming across the country that includes evidence-based practice strategies and involves services to integrate occupational therapists when possible (AOTA, n.d.).

Occupational therapists should be at the forefront to help make our communities safer and more accessible. A safer and healthier community improves quality of life, reduces hospitalizations and skilled nursing facility admissions, and ultimately lightens the load on the medical system (Santos et al., 2021). Occupational therapists should continue to explore opportunities to bridge the gap between the health care system, communities, and essential home repairs and modifications using our ability to integrate the impact of person and environmental factors on occupational performance and participation (Santos et al., 2021).

References

- AARP. (n.d.). *Livable communities are age-friendly*. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/about/>
- American Occupational Therapy Association. (n.d.). *Home modifications & key community partnerships*. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from <https://www.aota.org/practice/practice-settings/home-modifications-key-community-partnerships>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021, July 26). *STEADI-Older adults fall prevention*. <https://www.cdc.gov/steadi/index.html>
- Georlee, G. M., Abiram, U., Dat, P. N., Tuan, N. K., & Mehrotra, S. (2020). Home-modification interventions addressing falls and participation in activities of daily living among older adults: A scoping review protocol. *British Medical Journal*, *10*(9), e039742. <http://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-039742>
- Grasso, A. Y., Murphy, A., & Abbott-Gaffney, C. (2023). The Impact of a two-visit occupational therapy home modification model on low-income older adults. *The Open Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *11*(1), 1–9. <https://doi.org/10.15453/2168-6408.2047>
- Johns Hopkins School of Nursing. (n.d.). *Community aging in place- Advancing better living for elders (CAPABLE)*. Retrieved February 10, 2023, from https://nursing.jhu.edu/faculty_research/research/projects/capable/index.html
- National Council on Aging. (2022, July 21). *Get the facts on falls prevention*. <https://ncoa.org/article/get-the-facts-on-falls-prevention>
- Rebuilding Together. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved February 05, 2023, from <https://rebuildingtogether.org/about-us>
- Santos, E. D., Stutzbach, M., Trudeau, S. A., & Kariyawasam, S. (2021). Occupational therapy and home modifications: Breaking new ground with rebuilding together. *OT Practice*, *26* (11), 18–21.
- Stark, S., Keglovits, M., Arbesman, M., & Lieberman, D. (2017). Effect of home modification interventions on the participation of community – Dwelling adults with health conditions: A systematic review. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *71*(2), 7102290010. <https://doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2017.018887>