



Occupational Therapists' Capacity Building Needs Related to Older Driver Screening, Assessment and Intervention: A Canada-wide Survey

Summary of Korner-Bitensky, N., Menon, A., von Zweck, C., Van Benthem, K. (in press, 2010). Occupational therapists' capacity-building needs related to older driver screening, assessment and intervention: A Canada-wide survey. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*.

Occupational Therapy and Driving

Occupational therapists have an understanding of the complex interaction of the person, environment and occupation of driving. They have the knowledge of the functional tasks that are involved in the act of driving, as well as an awareness of the meaning of driving and its relation to independence in the older adult.

Current Occupational Therapy Practice in Older Driver Rehabilitation

Occupational therapists are recognized internationally as possessing the ideal skill set required to manage older driver safety. Currently, occupational therapists are involved in *screening, assessment* and *intervention* with older drivers. In a survey of 133 Canadian occupational therapists working with older adults, clinicians were twice as likely to perform screening, which quickly distinguishes individuals most likely to be unsafe drivers from those likely to drive safely, than they were to provide in-depth assessment involving a more detailed evaluation of driving skills both on and off the road. Less than 20% of the interviewed clinicians used on-road assessment in their evaluation of drivers. In terms of intervention, approximately 40% of these clinicians recommend vehicular modifications to their clients, and very few recommend driver retraining programs. Clinicians appear to be more likely to participate in continuing education if they are currently involved in the screening of older drivers, if the offered courses are available through web-based distance learning and, if the course is specifically related to older driver screening. For further information regarding the current role of occupational therapy in driver rehabilitation, please refer to the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists' recently updated position statement on this topic at www.caot.ca.

Current Perceptions of Canadian Occupational Therapists

The interviewed clinicians acknowledge the importance of continuing education in all areas of occupational therapy involvement with older drivers, regardless of whether or not they screen older drivers themselves. Generally, the surveyed clinicians appear to have a higher level of confidence in their abilities to provide screening rather than in-depth assessment, and very few feel confident in their abilities to assess on-road fitness to drive in older adults. Information on legal issues related to driving and therapist responsibility is highlighted as an area of importance and low competence for the surveyed clinicians.



Future Directions for Occupational Therapy and Driver Rehabilitation

Involvement in older driver safety is an optimal area for occupational therapy influence in terms of health promotion and injury prevention. Capacity-building for occupational therapists working in the area of driver rehabilitation is important in all areas of the occupational therapy process, though most specifically in terms of in-depth assessment and client-centered intervention. It is necessary to increase educational opportunities for clinicians working in this area, with an emphasis on web-based distance learning. All occupational therapists have a general knowledge of driver rehabilitation. Competency built on the foundational skills already possessed by occupational therapists would allow for a greater development of specialized expertise in this area. Specific areas in which this expertise should be targeted include in-depth on-road assessment, training and re-training of driving skills, vehicle modification, use of assistive technologies, and the understanding of legal and liability considerations related to the older driver. A commitment to the capacity-building of Canadian occupational therapists in the aforementioned areas will further position occupational therapy as leaders to enable older adults to utilize safe driving practices that prevent injury, promote health, well-being and public safety.



Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes

