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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FACT SHEET

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) provides occupational therapy services to Veterans and Servicemembers. Occupational Therapy (OT) involves the therapeutic use of everyday life activities (occupations) with individuals or groups for the purpose of participation in roles and situations in home, school, workplace, community, and other settings. OT provides services that promote health and wellness to those Veterans who have, or are at risk for developing, an injury, illness, disease or condition. OT evaluation and treatment supports Veterans' engagement in everyday life activities that affect health, well-being, and quality of life by addressing physical, cognitive, psychosocial, sensory, and other areas that could affect performance (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2009).

PATIENT POPULATION

VA Occupational therapy (OT) personnel provide services within Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services (PM&RS), covering a population that ranges from young adult to geriatric.

OT services cover a wide spectrum of neurological, orthopedic, medical, surgical, and mental (behavioral) health conditions. Special populations treated include:

- Amputation,
- Brain dysfunction or traumatic brain injury (TBI),
- Homelessness,
- Post traumatic stress disorder,
- Spinal cord injury/disorders,
- Stroke/neurological disorders,
- Vision loss

TREATMENT SETTINGS

OT personnel provide services in outpatient clinics, inpatient settings (including medical centers and community living centers), Veterans homes, and the expanding venue of Tele-rehabilitation.



(Photo courtesy of Mitch Mirken)

OT services provided in PM&R and other clinics, include specialized programs for Drivers Training, Polytrauma, Telerehabilitation, and Amputation care.

A full scope of services are available. In addition to addressing physical disabilities, occupational therapists also address the needs of Servicemembers and Veterans with mental health conditions and disorders.

CLINICAL ENCOUNTERS

In 2013, Occupational Therapists treated over 285,261 unique patients, accounting for over 1.2 million total encounters.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FACTS

Occupational therapists are highly trained health-care professionals. Effective in 2008, entry-level education requirements include a professional Master's degree in occupational therapy.

OT TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Occupational Therapy service promotes an environment for clinical education.





The Office of Academic Affiliations supports nearly 200 pre-professional occupational therapy students with stipends during their clinical training.

Many Occupational Therapists have advanced skills, certification and training in areas, such as;

- Assistive Technology
- Cognitive rehabilitation
- Drivers training
- Ergonomics
- Geriatric care
- Hand therapy
- Low vision
- Mental (behavioral) health
- Neuro-rehabilitation
- Pain management
- Power mobility, and
- Work Hardening

EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE

Occupational Therapists and Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) provide Veteran centric, state-of-the-art and evidence-based care to Veterans and Servicemembers.



(Photo courtesy of Robert Turtill)

ACCREDITATION

VA’s provision of evidence-based medical and rehabilitation care is supported through a system-wide collaboration with

Joint Commission and Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities to achieve and maintain national accreditation for VA Acute Care and Rehabilitation Programs.

Please contact your local VHA Occupational Therapy department to inquire about services available



VHA is the single largest employer of occupational therapists, employing more than 1,131 occupational therapists and 126 certified occupational therapy assistants



References

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2009). Scope of practice. Retrieved from <http://www.pacificu.edu/ot/documents/Scopeofpractice.pdf>

For more information, visit <http://www.rehab.va.gov/> May, 2014

