



Safe Home Environment and Home Health Services

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Home Accessibility and Modifications



SEMINAR INSTRUCTOR



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GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- Define and describe the role of OT in a community-based practice setting
- Impact of falls on participation and quality of life
- Identify fall hazards and cost-effective home modifications
- Recognize various community resources and funding options

What is Occupational Therapy?

- Helps individuals participate in meaningful activities despite physical, cognitive, or emotional challenges.
- Works with people of all ages, including those with disabilities, injuries, or illnesses, to develop or regain skills needed for daily activities.
- Extends its focus beyond individual homes to address broader environmental and community factors that impact safety and fall prevention.

Practice Settings

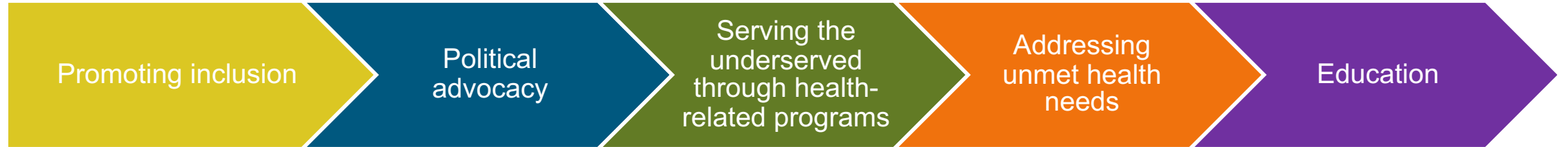
Traditional

- Rehabilitative model
- Direct patient care
- Hospitals, rehab facilities, home health

Innovative

- Habilitative
- Consultant or coach
- Collaborative model
- Health promotion programming and prevention

Role of OT in community-based practice



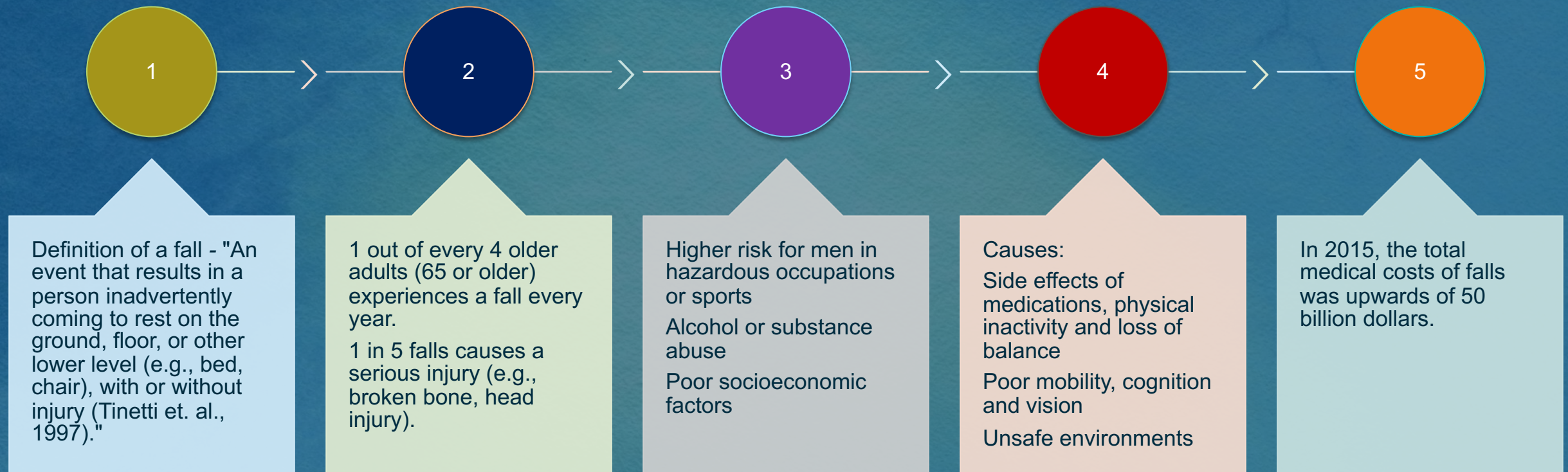
OT in a community-based practice settings

- Moving beyond the individual treatment of a client to working with a systems that affect the ability to achieve work, leisure and social goals
- Exploring the role of occupation in the shaping of a society and daily life
- All aspects that affect health and occupational engagement **MUST** be considered for therapy to be applicable and client-centered
 - *Home safety assessment to address barriers and accessibility issues*
 - *Fall prevention*

Meyers, 2009



Facts About Falls



(Bello-Haas & MacIntyre, 2018; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2017b)

Consequences of Falls

- Small falls can be serious or fatal
- 6% were unable to get up by themselves >1 hr
- 7% were concerned that no one would notice as they don't see anyone for days
- 23% of older people said poor street conditions decrease confidence about leaving home
- Even if no injuries it can result to:
 - Increased fear of falling
 - Decreased participation/activity levels
 - Further weakness and impaired balance

Fall Risk Factors

Extrinsic

- Lack of handrails
- Poor stair design
- Dim or poor lighting
- Trip hazards
- Slippery or uneven floors
- Medication side effects
- Improper use of AD

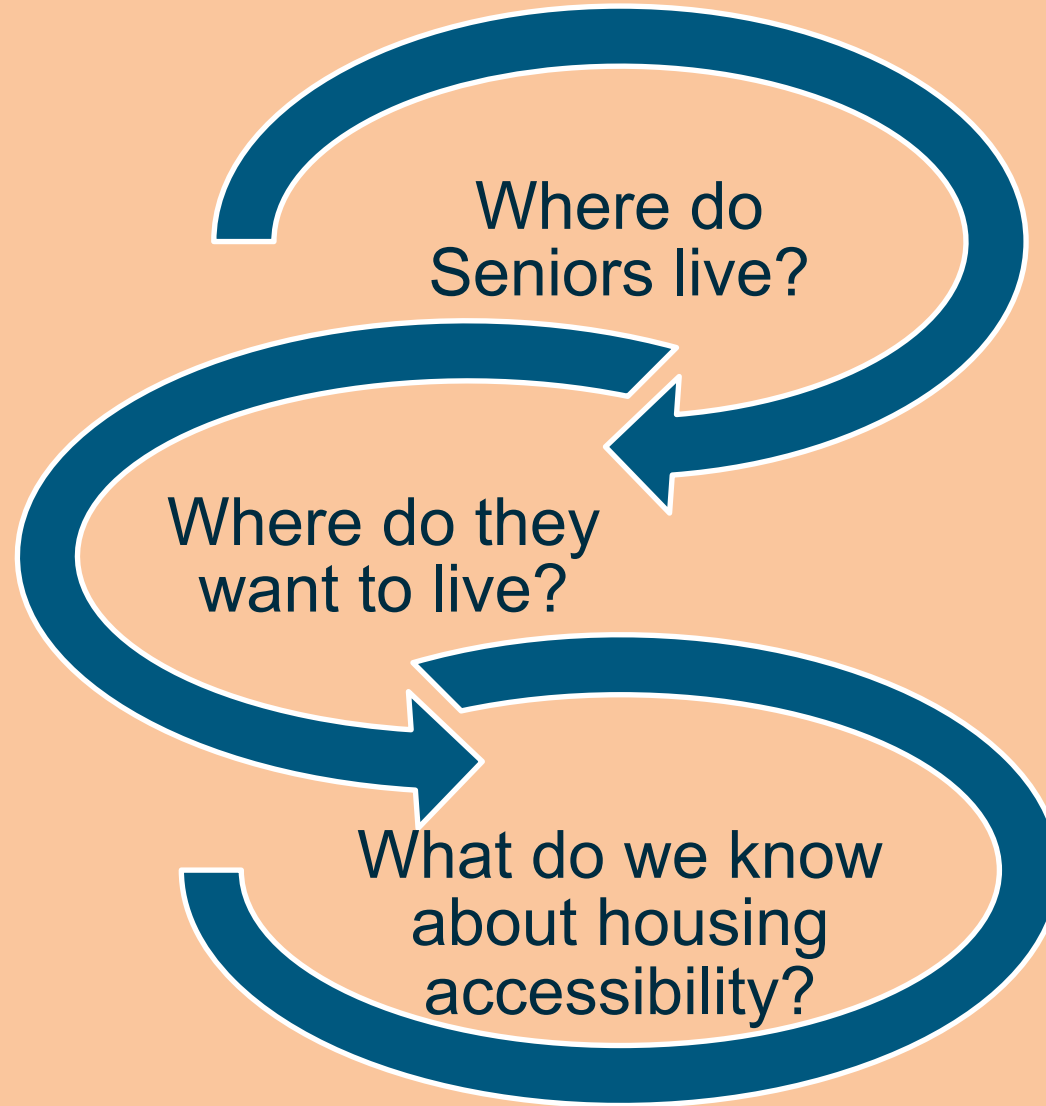
Intrinsic

- Advanced age
- Previous falls
- Muscle weakness, coordination
- Gait & balance problems
- Poor vision
- Orthostatic hypotension
- Chronic or acute conditions
- Fear of falling

(CDC, 2017a)

WHO Guidelines for Fall Prevention for Seniors

- Gait, balance and functional training
- Tai Chi
- Home assessment and modifications
- Reduction or withdrawal of psychotropic drugs
- Multifactorial interventions (individual fall-risk assessments followed by tailored interventions and referrals to address identified risks)
- Vitamin D supplements for those who are Vitamin D deficient



Housing accessibility and home modifications



Structural

- Extra-wide doorways
- No steps between rooms and rails/grab bars along all steps
- Accessible bathroom
- Stepless entry
- Kitchen countertops, cabinets
- Ramps, stairlifts, elevators

Cost-effective

- Switches, climate controls, cameras
- Lever door/sink handles
- Emergency alarms (audible/visual)
- Grab bars, raised toilets
- Non-skid or self-adhesive rugs

Home Assessment



Entrance to Front Door and Front Yard

- Lack of or unstable railings
- Unsafe steps (too steep/cracked)
- Unmarked or raised threshold
- Lack of lighting at night
- Lack of ramp for a wheelchair
- Uneven/cracked pavement

Solutions

- Add at least one railing, ideally each side
- Repair damaged steps
- Mark end of steps/thresholds with contrasting tape or paint
- Add outdoor lighting fixture/sensor light
- Construct a ramp

Home Assessment



Hallway/Foyer

- Uneven or slippery flooring
- Cluttered area
- Dark or poor lighting
- Lack of access to ceiling light



Solutions

- Make sure floor is dry
- Remove rugs or secure using double-sided rug tape
- Have carpet stretched to eliminate wrinkles and bumps
- Remove clutter
- Add lighting

Home Assessment



Living Room

- Presence of throw or scatter rug
- Cluttered area
- Presence of electric cords across the floor
- Poor lighting
- Unstable furniture
- Not enough space to move around



Solutions

- Repair or remove unstable furniture
- Remove rugs or secure using double-sided rug tape
- Have carpet stretched to eliminate wrinkles and bumps
- Eliminate clutter or remove excess furniture
- Add “clapper” light switches

Home Assessment



Kitchen

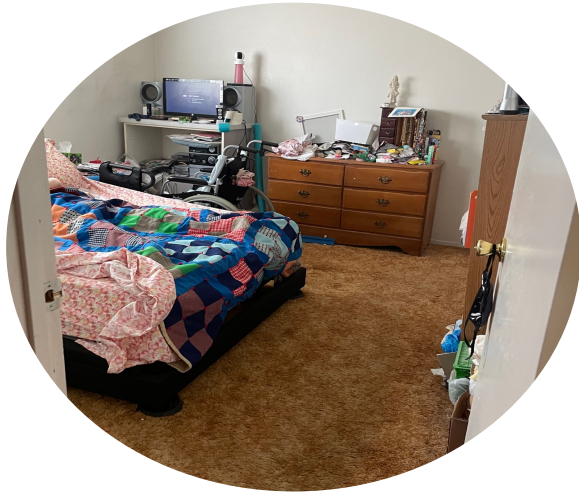
- Cabinet too high or too low
- Not enough counter space
- Using a stool to reach things
- Not enough room to maneuver
- Slippery floor
- Presence of rugs
- Poor lighting



Solutions

- Move items to the shelves closest to the counter; add hooks to pots/pans; use a reacher
- Use available counter space, rolling cart
- Eliminate clutter; remove a leaf from the table and push closer to the wall
- Wear comfortable shoes or change flooring surface
- Add counter lighting
- Remove pets while cooking or use a gate

Home Assessment



Bedroom

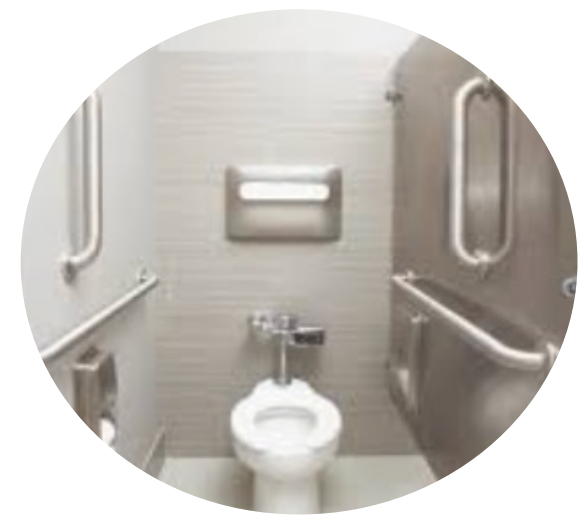
- Cluttered area
- Presence of rugs, electric cords
- Poor lighting
- Height of bed (too high/low)
- Arrangement causes difficulty to reach items
- Lack of device to get in/out bed



Solutions

- Use a reacher or place items needed on bedside table
- Install half bedrail or bed cane
- Eliminate clutter, Add night lighting
- Use bed riser under bed legs to raise height; remove bed frame or use a lower profile mattress or box spring
- Have carpet stretched to remove bumps

Home Assessment



Bathroom

- Cluttered area, presence of rugs
- Slippery tub
- Lack of grab bars (shower, toilet)
- Unstable devices or shower doors, no bench or handheld shower
- Incorrect placement of devices (riser too high, grab bars)

Solutions

- Use a rug with non-skid or double-sided tape
- Eliminate clutter, Add night lighting
- Have a qualified professional install grab bars
- Consider the person's height when buying a riser or use a low-profile toilet
- Use a tub transfer bench for the tub and rubber mat

Home Assessment



Staircases

- Lack of railings
- Poor lighting
- Clutter
- Steps too steep
- Slippery steps without tread/carpet

Solutions

- Eliminate clutter on steps, add night lighting
- Have a qualified professional install railings down the entire length of the wall, ideally one on each side
- Add adhesive stair treads or carpet runner
- Reduce daily use of stairs to reduce risk of falls

Funding Home modifications



Durable Medical Equipment

- Raised toilet seat
- Tub transfer benches
- Complicated bathroom equipment
- Ceiling lifts, hoist lifts, stair lift (sit to stand lifts)

Home Modifications

- Ramps
- Roll-in shower
- Widening doorways
- Stair lifts
- Bidet, comfort height toilet
- Grab bars

Medicare Part B: What is covered?

- Durable, serves a medical purpose
- Appropriate for use in/outside the home
- Likely to last for >3 yrs
- Must be prescribed by PCP
- If in a skilled nursing, rehab it is covered by Part A.

Other examples of DME

- Wheelchairs
- Walkers
- Hospital beds
- Power scooters
- Lifts

Medicare Part B: What is not covered?

- Equipment that intended to help outside the home (scooter if you can walk short distances)
- Items that make things more convenient or comfortable (elevators, grab bars, tubs or toilet seats)
- Home modifications (ramps or widened doorways) for improving wheelchair access

Medicare Part B: What is not covered?

- Equipment that intended to help outside the home (scooter if you can walk short distances)
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Medicare Part C: Medicare Advantage

- May provide additional or supplemental services to those with complex care needs
- IN 2020, may target minor home mods to help accommodate walkers or wheelchairs or home delivered meals (low salt or sugar)
- Supplemental benefits MUST provide “**a reasonable expectation of improving or maintaining the health or overall function**” of the person receiving the benefit.
- MA plans vary state by state

Medicaid

- Straight Medicaid
 - Covers DME (complex bathing equipment – sliding tub transfer bench)
- Home and Community Based Services Medicaid Waiver Programs
 - Less expensive to provide services at home versus nursing home etc
 - Includes caregiver support, Environmental Accessibility Adaptations
 - Special program with eligibility requirements

<https://www.payingforseniorcare.com/home-modifications/medicaid-waivers>

Medicaid

- Medicaid Managed Care Programs
 - Some states have replaced their Waiver programs
 - Must supply the same benefits as the original Waiver program
- Money Follows the Person
 - Person is living in a nursing home and wish to return to their private home (with family members or friends)
 - Covers modifications to allow for access to the home and for basic ADLs

List of state specific programs: <https://www.payingforseniorcare.com/home-modifications/medicaid-waivers>

Other Funding Sources

- **Medicaid Eligible Spend Down**
 - *Varies, state has asset limits and a 5 yr look back period*
 - *Home improvements (chair lifts)*
- **Veterans Coverage**
 - *Specially Adapted Housing (SAH), Special Housing Adaptation (SHA), Home Improvement and Structural Alteration (HISA)*
 - *Veterans Directed Home and Community Based Services (VD-HCBS)*
 - *Pensions*
- **Long term care insurance**
 - *Check if policy has home modifications to install ramps, grab bars etc*

Other Funding Sources

- **Non-medical government assistance (HUD Home Improvement, Dept of Agriculture Repair and Rehabilitation Grants, Nursing Home Transition and Diversion Programs)**
- **Loans- states have low interest option for Assistive Technology (NV Assistive Technology Resource Center)**
- **Non-profit options (Rebuilding Together, Catholic Charities, Habitat for Humanity, Senior Corps)**

Benefits of an accessible home/home modifications



- Decreased perceived difficulty in ADL/IADLS performance, transfers/mobility
- Improved self-efficacy and confidence
- Increased bathroom safety
- Reduction in falls
- Lower post-hospitalization rates
- Lower mortality rates
- Decreased fear of falls
- Enhanced mood and quality of life
- Improved overall health

Take-Home Points

- Falls have a devastating impact that includes both physical and psychological factors
- Falls are a significant cost burden on the individual as well as the medical system
- Factors in the risk of falling is home accessibility and home safety
- Assisting with appropriate home modifications is essential for seniors who are going to continue to live in their own homes
- Consult with an Occupational Therapist for increased home safety and accessibility.

References and Resources

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- <https://www.unr.edu/nced/projects/nced-natrc>

Nevada Senior Services

UNLV-NIHAN

Participants

Clients and consumers





Creating an Age-Friendly Health System & Dementia-Friendly Community in Nevada

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Questions?