

# MAHCP Career Profile

## Occupational Therapist

Submitted by  
Adele Spence  
B of Med Rehab (OT)



Adele Spence, OT

**The most common question an Occupational Therapist (OT) hears is... What in the world is an OT?** At various medical institutions you may have seen us running around with dressing equipment; working with wheelchairs; watching while clients prepare meals in our kitchen; making hand splints; or participating in various physical activities in the OT department. But what does it all mean, and are we really having as much fun as we appear?

Occupational therapists like to think of themselves as being very practical people who deal with the job of living. We divide this into the three main areas of life in which people participate – self-care, productivity, and leisure. **Our therapy assists clients in managing tasks to care for themselves such as washing and dressing or shopping and cooking, to name a few. We also adapt environment and activities that allow people to work safely, as well as enjoy their leisure time.** In addition,

OT's recognize our clients are more than just a mass of muscles and bones. We are trained to address the psychological and emotional parts of a person in order to be successful with interventions. The final result is that our clients lead more independent, productive, safe, and satisfying lives.

Our job is as varied as the clients we see, but some basic daily living skills we address are:

- Learning new ways of doing things. i.e. dress or cook using one arm or to use equipment in order to maintain independence.
- Do activities to help maintain and improve strength, endurance, range of motion, and balance. We often do this by playing various games so

that clients don't even realize they're working hard.

- Adapt material or recommend equipment clients use such as properly fitted wheelchairs; bath and toilet equipment to maintain safety at home; recommend specialized eating utensils so that clients can feed themselves.
- Assess and train clients for safe use of manual and power wheelchairs and scooters
- Provide education on energy conservation, joint protection, and safety
- Home visits to provide commendations to maximize safety and prevent re-hospitalization before the client is discharged.



OT's work in a wide variety of settings including: hospitals and rehabilitation centres; group homes and hospices; the community and home health programs; business and industry; schools and private practice. You will also find us working in many different specialities such as ergonomics and injury prevention; return to work programs; psychiatry; geriatrics; paediatrics; and as advocates for disabled persons, to name a few.

So back to the original question: **As OT's, we don't cure the person who's had the stroke, chronic illness or life threatening disease, but we assist people to adapt to their circumstances which allows them to get on with the job of living.** And yes, we do have fun doing our jobs because it often means our clients begin to enjoy their lives again.

