

Occupational Therapy 24 Hour Virtual Exchange World Occupational Therapy Day 2011



“Occupational Therapy’s Role in Cancer Survivorship” *Stephanie Phan, OTReg.(Ont.)*

Introduction: Cancer is considered one of the more prevalent chronic diseases. With an increased rate of survival, more occupational therapists will encounter a greater number of patients with cancer in various clinical settings. Management includes not only medical and surgical regimens targeted at curing the disease, but also addressing persistent and late effects of treatments such as fatigue, pain, lymphedema, cognitive impairments, weight gain, psychological distress and sexual/body image issues. Symptoms may persist for months or years after treatment has ended and interfere with usual functioning. Cancer affects the person in his/her entirety. With our holistic perspective of a person, occupational therapists play an emerging yet pivotal role in helping to optimize the functional independence, emotional and psychological health and quality of life of cancer survivors.

Objectives: To describe the evolution of the occupational therapy (OT) role within the Cancer Survivorship Program at Princess Margaret Hospital. With the shift moving away from traditional OT roles and transitioning towards a model of self-management/self-care in dealing with late effects of cancer treatment, new and emerging roles for OTs will be explored. The challenges of educating and training health care providers in essential components of survivorship care will be discussed. Barriers to optimal survivorship care and the need for education and training resources will be highlighted. Further examples of the OT roles within the Survivorship Self-care Clinics will be provided during this presentation. To enhance outcomes for the growing number of people with and surviving cancer, advocacy for occupational therapy services as part of their rehabilitation services is greatly needed.