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Occupational Therapy at the System's Level: Production and Use of a Television Documentary on Senior Driving and Community Mobility

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Introduction: In this presentation I will describe a tool and a process of OT intervention at the system's level to improve community mobility, participation and quality of life in older adults.

Objectives: Participants will: 1) name the benefits of a systems approach to address community mobility; 2) understand the practicalities of partnership-building for the financing, development and production of a public TV documentary; 3) provide examples of educational outreach and advocacy using the documentary's DVD. 4) list the unique skills OTs have to affect change at the systems level;

Problem Description: Decreased opportunities for occupational participation when driving becomes difficult or impossible can result in social isolation and is a health risk for seniors (Marottoli). OTs have made great strides in their individual work with older drivers and their families (Schold-Davis). The factors stimulating an expansion of OT intervention to the system's level include: a) to allow seniors to drive longer safely, certain habits have to be developed over several years; b) traditional ways in which clients are referred to OT services are not adequate to allow OTs to work on prevention and transition; c) OT work on those issues is necessarily limited without policy-level changes in road design and availability of transit.

Results: In collaboration with colleagues on the Board of a non-profit organization, I lead the development of a partnership for the production of a one-hour public TV documentary on older driver and community mobility issues. Partners include public entities (i.e. Department of Health, Public Safety) an advocacy organization promoting transit, and an insurance company.

Conclusions: Both the process of building the partnership and the production of the documentary did provide opportunities for increased awareness of possible solutions, including the role of OT. The educational outreach and advocacy using the documentary's DVD allowed to complement the broadcast of the TV show in promoting system's level change.

Contribution to Practice: OTs have a unique understanding of environmental constraints on individuals' occupations and how to adapt the environment to improve health and well-being. They can use this presentation as a concrete model for intervention at the systems level.