

Occupational Therapy Strategies for Addressing Depression in Patients with Physical Disabilities

John Ignatovich¹, Ellen McLaughlin²

¹*Wilkes Barre General Hospital, Wilkes Barre, Pennsylvania, USA,* ²*Misericordia University, Dallas, Pennsylvania, USA*

Introduction/Rationale: Addressing the mental health disorder, depression, is not the first thing to come to mind when thinking of occupational therapy practice in physical disability settings. While this dilemma can be attributed to several factors, the Occupational Therapy Practice Framework highlights the mind-body-spirit connection that should be incorporated into practice (American Occupational Therapy Association [AOTA], S4). **Objective:** Our objective was to uncover the current status of how occupational therapy practitioners in the United States are addressing depression and its impact on occupational performance for patients in physical disability settings. In addition, we strive to present ideas and options for how this area of our practice can be optimized, despite the identified barriers.

Method: A survey, identifying the perceived prevalence of depression in physical disability settings as well as the strategies, supports and limitations impacting this area of practice was distributed to 1000 occupational therapists throughout the United States.

Results: The most common barriers identified by the 142 respondents included reimbursement, motivation, acceptance, lack of system support, time, resources and knowledge. Numerous and varied strategies to address depression were identified and ranged from meal preparation, community integration, laundry and leisure to technology use, adapted yoga, life balance activities and caring for pets.

Practice Implications: The potential use of these interventions to decrease the impact of depression on occupational performance across physical disability settings will be discussed.

American Occupational Therapy Association. (2014). Occupational therapy practice framework: Domain and process (3rd ed.). *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 68(Suppl. 1), S1-S48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5014/ajot.2014.682006>