

The Digital Age of Occupational Therapy (OT) Home Visits

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BACKGROUND

Occupational therapy home visits are time intensive and removes the occupational therapist from the ward, reducing the available time to see other patients.

Balancing available resources

Emerging trend in using technology as a means to increase efficiency and effectiveness of the occupational therapists in a variety of settings

AIM

- Providing best care for our patients, utilising resources and technology effectively.
- Clear guidelines and indication for inpatient home visits and the use of technology.
- Support occupational therapists to complete home visits with complex patients.

BASELINE

- High volume of home visits in some clinical areas.
- Limited FTE on inpatient wards.
- Home visits are time intensive.

Specialty	Volume visits (2016)
Medical/Surgical	48
Orthopaedics	31
Assessment Treatment & Rehabilitation (AT&R) (over 65 rehab)	264
Total	343

METHODS

Snap shot of current literature

Increasing evidence supports telehealth in improving access to services, prevents unnecessary delays, and facilitates coordinated care.

Studies supporting using digital photos taken by family members or home visits via telehealth is comparable to conventional home visits in certain situations.

Studies in rural Australia concluded incorporating telehealth technology into practice may enable therapists to provide home-based therapy while overcoming the barrier of distance in rural and remote areas.

Home visit options

Establishing options for home visits that incorporate different health care professionals and modalities of telehealth, that have inclusion and exclusion criteria to guide therapists in clinical decision making:

- Option 1: No home visit
- Option 2: Environmental questionnaire & videos/photos
- Option 3: Therapy Assistant home visit (without patient)
- Option 4: No home visit by OT/video call family
- Option 5: Therapy Assistant home visit with patient
- Option 6: OT home visit

Environmental Questionnaire

An environmental questionnaire was developed for staff to give patients' families, or friends, to complete with corresponding photographs and be emailed back to the therapist.



Staff experience

Pre and post surveys were completed to understand staff experience.

The purpose of pre-project survey was to gather initial information regarding therapist thoughts and perceptions of the questionnaire prior to the trial.

The post-survey aimed to understand the occupational therapist's experience using the environmental questionnaire and digital photographs captured by patients and families.

OUTCOMES

Environmental Questionnaire

- Questionnaire used between 1 June and 30 September 2017 (4 months).
- 95 environmental questionnaires completed.
- 14 home visit replacements identified.
- Questionnaires utilised across medical/surgical, orthopaedic and assessment, treatment and rehabilitation wards.

Savings

- Home visit replacements saved approx. 42 hours in occupational therapy time. Estimated by the average time spent undertaking the home visit which is defined by travel, the visit, liaison and clinical documentation.
- Total savings over four months = \$1625.04. This can be broken down by staffing savings of \$1373.74 and infrastructure savings of \$251.30.

Staff experience

- Feedback received from occupational therapists (n=8) on their experience showed:
- 75% felt confident or very confident integrating the tool into practice
 - 87.5% believed it improved patient and family involvement in discharge planning
 - 100% agreed or strongly agreed it improved the timeliness of therapy
 - 75% agreed or strongly agreed the questionnaire increased the amount of time they can directly spend with patients

Specialty Area	Questionnaires (volume)	Home visit replacements (volume)	Percentage of home visit replacements from questionnaires
Medical/Surgical	27	2	7.4%
Ortho	40	3	7.5%
AT&R (over 65 rehab)	28	9	32.14%
Total	95	14	14.74