

What can an Occupational Therapy evaluation offer?

Occupational Therapy assessments can:

- *identify those areas of daily activity where a client is having the most difficulty in,*
- *prioritise issues for targeted treatment planning,*
- *gain deeper insight into one or more functional issues,*
- *match recommended courses of action to available resources, e.g. approved focussed psychological strategies under the Medicare Better Access initiative,*
- *identify other contributing factors to the client's difficulties, and*
- *provide recommendations on the level of assistance the client may require.*

The following is a strictly hypothetical case scenario that illustrates an example of an Occupational Therapy evaluation process:

A 19 year old male with documented diagnoses of Generalised Anxiety Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, is referred to an Occupational Therapist as he is experiencing difficulties in his everyday life. The Occupational Therapist initially interviews the client to determine in which particular life areas he is experiencing problems. The client also provided permission for his mother to be interviewed to corroborate his reports. The standardized Canadian Occupational Performance Measure (COPM) is administered to assist with this. The client identifies issues with following lectures at university, communicating with his colleagues at his part time job and completing cooking and cleaning tasks at home. His mother substantiated this upon interview. The client rates school and work as extremely important to be able to do. He does not prioritise household management as highly. As a result, the Occupational Therapist will initially collaborate with the client around the activities that are most important to him.

As the client identified communication issues with his work colleagues, the Occupational Therapist decides to administer the Evaluation of Social Interaction (ESI) standardized assessment tool. This tool will examine the quality of the client's social interaction performance. The results of the ESI were able to identify the specific issues he was experiencing during social exchanges, provided a measure which could then determine if the client's quality of social interaction was within age expectations and was able to determine his overall quality of social interaction which was found to be mildly ineffective and/or immature. The Occupational Therapist then recommended a course of communication and social skills training - which are approved focussed psychological strategies under the Medicare Better Access initiative.

The Occupational Therapist suspected sensory processing patterns may be contributing to the client's difficulties at university. The Adolescent/Adult Sensory Profile standardized assessment tool was then administered to further explore this hypothesis. The results indicated that he demonstrated low registration. Individuals with low registration tend to miss or take longer to respond to sensory stimuli that others notice. For example, they may not detect a smell that bothers everyone else in the room, or may be the last one in the room to understand a joke. As the client scored "More than Most People" in Low Registration, this suggested that he is missing sensory stimuli and is unable to take advantage of cues in his environment due to slowed processing. In particular, this was predominantly a pattern for the auditory category, suggesting that the client may be more likely to miss or delay responding to verbal cues - which could be a contributing factor to the difficulties he experienced when attending university lectures. The Occupational Therapist then recommended the approved focussed psychological strategies of psycho-education and problem-solving skills training.

At a later stage the Occupational Therapist did also administer the standardized Assessment of Motor and Process Skills (AMPS), to further investigate the difficulties the client reported with household management. The AMPS is an observation based evaluation of an individual's ability to perform everyday tasks or activities of daily living (ADL). Similarly to the ESI, the AMPS was able to identify the specific skills impacting the client's performance, could assist with determining the level of assistance he required to live in the community and to determine if his ADL process and motor ability measures were within age expectations. When observing motor skills the Occupational Therapist is examining those skills required when an individual is moving oneself or task objects during the performance of ADL tasks. Observation of process skills involves the individual selecting, interacting with, and using task tools and materials; carrying out individual task actions and steps; and modifying task performance when problems are encountered. The Occupational Therapist then recommended specific functional skills training once the results of the AMPS was reviewed.

The assessments listed in this case scenario exemplify which tools may be utilized for a particular client. However the Occupational Therapist may also or instead draw on a variety of questionnaires, checklists and rating scales both Occupational Therapy and Mental Health specific depending on the needs of the client.