

What is an Occupational Therapist?

- An Occupational Therapist (OT) helps people get back to doing the things they need to do, want to do, or are expected to do in their day-to-day life.
- OTs complete evaluations of a person's current performance in meaningful activities and provide treatment to increase their ability to participate in these activities.
- OTs work with people across the lifespan with various needs; therefore, the types of evaluations and treatments are specific to their activity needs.

What is the role of the Occupational Therapist at the Complex Concussion Clinic?

- At the Complex Concussion Clinic (CCC), the OT works with patients to improve participation in instrumental activities of daily living (IADL's), visual skills, upper extremity function, and sensory integration that may be impacted following a mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI) or concussion.
- IADL's:
 - Improve tolerance for grocery shopping, finances, driving, education/work tasks and daily routines
 - Identify which IADL's are difficult
 - Identify and address why participation is challenging: overwhelming noise/visual levels, increased demands for multi-tasking, etc.
- Visual skills:
 - Improve visual symptoms and sensitivities (i.e., double vision, light sensitivity)
 - Improve ability of both eyes to work together
 - Improve eye muscle strength and coordination
 - Visual perceptual skills: how our brain understands what we see
- Upper extremity function:
 - Strength
 - Endurance
 - Sensation
 - Coordination
 - Range of motion
 - Pain
- Sensory processing and integration:
 - Sensory processing refers to the way the nervous system takes in information from the senses – and turns it into appropriate or inappropriate responses.
 - Sensory information is gathered through our eyes, ears, muscles, joints, skin, and inner ears.
 - Sensory processing disorder can affect one or many senses. Our assessments will help us find which sensory systems may be affected and how to help someone improve their quality of life.
 - Sensory integration means re-training the body to understand and respond to sensory information more appropriately to increase participation in daily activities and decrease discomfort.



What can be done to improve skills and participation in IADL's after mTBI or concussion?

- Patients learn fatigue management and strategies to support them when participating in activities with family or friends.
- Driving interventions involve activities specifically designed to improve reaction time, visual scanning, attention, range of motion, or adaptive strategies.
 - Adaptive strategies:
 - Changes to the vehicle for easy reaching
 - Only driving during the day
 - Driving with another person in the car
 - Limited highway driving
 - Transportation alternatives
 - Driving simulation may be used to:
 - Decrease anxiety provoking elements of driving situations
 - Promote self-awareness of driving safety difficulties
 - Apply learned coping strategies during transportation and community mobility tasks
- Sensory de-sensitization and coping strategies are practiced improving quality of life and increase daily participation.
- Visual skills:
 - Eye muscles strengthening exercises
 - Visual perceptual resources
 - Visual accommodations/ resources
- Referrals to vision specialists as needed

What might an Occupational Therapy session look like at CCC?

- Session activities vary based on each patient's needs and goals. Here are examples of things that might be done during an OT session at CCC:
 - Explore pacing and sensory strategies to use during IADL participation to manage visual symptoms.
 - Address eye strength and coordination by completing work or school simulated tasks.
 - Practice driving skills by serving as an active passenger during a community drive.
 - Practice visual scanning strategies during a grocery store scavenger hunt.

Helpful resource for more information on vision after a concussion/mild TBI:

<https://www.myshepherdconnection.org/abi/Mild-Brain-Injury>

References:

Weightman, M. M., Radomski, M. V., Mashima, P. A., & Roth, C. R. (2014). Mild traumatic brain injury rehabilitation toolkit. Fort Sam Houston, TX: Borden Institute. Retrieved May 28, 2020, from https://books.google.com/books?id=e1d2lqLRhEC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

Additional Comments: