

# *A Review on Occupational Therapy in Iran*

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## **Abstract:**

**T**his article is a review on occupational therapy in Iran. Occupational therapy started in the Rehabilitation faculty of Iran Medical University as a BS degree in 1973 . About 2000 students were graduated in occupational therapy and are active in different parts of the country .They assist disabled individuals to achieve maximal independence . In this article, a summary of the history and educational structure of occupational therapy and job opportunities of graduates of this speciality in Iran is given.

## **Key words:**

*Occupational Therapy / Educational Structure*

## **History:**

The discipline of occupational therapy in Iran dates back 33 years in 1971. Mrs. Yansen, an occupational therapist from the World Health Organization established an occupational therapy ward in Shafa Yahyaeyan rehabilitation hospital. She trained the first group of OTs under her direct supervision , they were qualified in OT as a the technicians but were not awarded degrees . In 1973 the Rehabilitation Faculty of Iran Medical

University started to train experts and specialists in different rehabilitation branches, including occupational therapy, physical therapy and speech therapy at BS level. Also, the Rehabilitation Faculty of Beheshti Medical University and the University of Social Welfare and Rehabilitation Sciences (USWRS) started to educate students in 1987 and 1993 respectively. These universities now run BS and MS degrees . As there hasn't been PhD degree education available for occupational therapists, usually they have to study in foreign countries.

Meanwhile , PhD course plan in occupational therapy is dealing with its final stage for confirmation process in Ministry of Health , and Medical Education .

## **Educational Structure and Programs:**

The Occupational Therapy BS degree is offered to high school graduates who have passed the National University Entrance Examination and has studied the four year course of OT program.

The program consists of 137 unit credits at BS level and 35 unit credits at Ms level in theory and clinical practice . The content of theory and practical units is based on a wide range of activities and consists of basic , specialty courses and clinical training. The basic courses include anatomy, neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, physiology, psychology , psychiatry , physiopathology and so on. The specialty courses include Activity of Daily

Living ( ADL ) , kinesiology and biomechanics, occupational therapy in different diseases ( such as physical , mental, psychologic , pediatric , geriatric ) , play therapy, splint designing and so on. The clinical trainings include physical dysfunctions ( such as orthopedic, neurologic ) , mental & psychologic disorders, mental retardation, children developmental disorders (such as cerebral palsy) and vocational rehabilitation.

Clinical training courses are offered in rehabilitation centers related to the universities such as hospitals and clinics under instructors' supervision.

### **Activity and Employment Fields of Occupational Therapists :**

Graduates of occupational therapy assist disabled individuals in different fields. Nearly 2000 occupational therapists are working in the country. The spectrum of their services is as follows:

- Physical dysfunctions are:
- Orthopedic
- Neurological
- Rheumatological
- Congenital Deficiency
- Psychological Disorders
- Disorders in children (cerebral palsy, developmental and congenital disorders)
- Mental Impairments (mental retardation, learning disabilities, autism)
- Aging (disorders and disabilities).
- Visual Handicap
- Auditory Handicap
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Addiction

Due to the wide range of activities, occupational therapists are employed in different centers and organization in Iran and perform educational, research and thera-

peutic activities. OT centers are as follows:

- Hospitals related to Ministry of Health, and Medical Education
- Vocational centers related to Welfare Organization
- School of children with special needs related to Special Educational Organization.
- Rehabilitation centers related to Red Crescent Organization.
- Public clinics and educational therapeutic centers under supervision of universities
- Private occupational therapy clinics
- Daily rehabilitation centers (OT services for children and psychological patients)
- Senior Citizen Centers (aging nursing homes)
- Vocational rehabilitation centers .

### **Features of Occupational Therapy :**

These ideas underpin the work of Occupational Therapy.

1. Using purposeful activities which can affect individual health.
2. Therapeutic goals are considered based on a holistic approach in which all aspects including physical, social, psychological and so on have to be taken into account.
3. Interpersonal relationships are important factors in the occupational therapy process.
4. Occupational therapy incorporates other medical courses in order to obtain maximal function in the patient .

### **Tasks of the occupational therapist :**

The occupational therapist participates as a member of rehabilitation team in the therapeutic process planning so depending on the disabilities and field of activities ( physical , psychological , ... ) and his / her role includes :

- physical evaluation based on occupational therapist standard test
- psychological evaluation based on occupational therapist standard test
- Evaluating the progress of patient
- Vocational evaluation of physical handicapped
- Vocational evaluation of psychological handicapped
- Provide occupational intervention for promoting functional performances.
- Improving independence of activities of daily living in patients
- Providing and designing of assistive devices for patients according to their disabilities
- Investigating the situation of home, job and educational environment in order to modify these places with patients disabilities
- Instruction of patients who use orthoses, prosthesis and assistive devices
- Counselling the patient's family regarding required instructions and occupational therapy

### **Iranian Association of Occupational Therapy (IAOT) :**

The increasing number of occupational therapists and the necessity to share thoughts and opinions to improve services resulted in the foundation of IAOT. IAOT was established in 1989 and its activities started in 1992. The, Ministry of Interior approved it in 1994.

### **The major purposes of IAOT are :**

- Introducing occupational therapy courses and their practical application
- Improving the relationship between academic and research community and occupational therapists .
- Strengthening cooperation between occupational therapists in academic centers and public and private sectors.
- To help members to solve problems while considering their rights
- Cooperating with scientific , educational, research and therapeutic centers such as Ministry of Health, and Medical Education and Ministry of Culture and Higher Education
- Translating, publishing and distribution of news received from international communities, research results and scientific events of Iranian and foreigner researchers
- Survey on occupational therapy affairs and presenting their results to related centers
- Advocacy regarding different issues (educational , research, ...) presented by ministers, institutions and governmental and non - governmental organization to IAOT
- Evaluating the country's needs in respect of the number of occupational therapy graduates
- Investigation in how to educate the public about prevention methods of handicaps and their rehabilitation
- Cooperation with organizations, rehabilitation and scientific associations and the handicapped associations
- Instruction of ethic criteria in rehabilitation and medicine societies.
- holding conferences, educational and scientific seminars and publishing their relative documents

The Iranian Association of Occupational

Therapy has become a member of World Federation of Occupational Therapy in 2004.

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