

The Benefits of Occupational Therapists Working in Primary Care: A Systematic Review

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Research Question

What are the **benefits** of **occupational therapists** working in **primary care**?

Introduction

Primary care is often the first point of contact within the healthcare system. Occupational therapists can improve health management, safety, and participation in daily activities, yet their role in primary care is often overlooked. This systematic review examined the benefits of occupational therapy services in primary care settings.

Method

This systematic review followed PRISMA guidelines.

- **Search conducted:** May 21, 2026 to May 29, 2026
- **Inclusion criteria:** Peer-reviewed, published in English, and published between 2021-2026
- **Exclusion criteria:** Systematic reviews, scoping reviews, dissertations, and presentations
- **Databases:** PubMed, MEDLINE, and CINAHL through Hawai'i Pacific University's online library database
- **Search terms:** *Occupational therapy, benefits, effectiveness, primary care, primary healthcare* as well as a combination of these terms.
- **Reviewers:** Four independent reviewers

References

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Figure 1. OT in Primary Care



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Figure 2. Interprofessional Team



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Results

This review included six studies. Three themes were identified among the studies.

1. **Patient Outcomes:** OT practitioners benefit primary care teams through specific roles, client impact, and team collaboration resulting in improved patient outcomes (Fig. 1).
2. **Health and Chronic Condition Management:** OT promotes medication education and ensures patient understanding of diseases in primary care.
3. **Interdisciplinary Collaboration Within Primary Care Teams:** Primary care teams benefit from OTs by providing professionalism, communication, and team effort in a collaborative practice (Fig. 2).

Discussion

The results of this systematic review suggest that occupational therapy services in primary care may improve patient outcomes, support health and management of chronic conditions, and contribute to interdisciplinary collaboration within primary care teams. The studies found that occupational therapy services promoted health and well-being and improved medication adherence among people receiving primary care services.

Conclusion

- Occupational therapy services in primary care demonstrate positive effects on patient outcomes.
- Evidence supports improvements in medication management, health promotion, participation in activities of daily living (ADLs) and functional performance.
- Additional research is necessary to establish the long-term benefits and effectiveness of OT services in primary care.