

Cognition and the Role of Occupational Therapy

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What is Occupational Therapy (OT)?

- OTs focus on function
- OTs assess, treat, and help manage people's daily activities after an injury or illness
 - This includes:
 - Personal Care
 - Household roles/tasks
 - Mobility
 - Cognition

What is Cognition?

- The term 'Cognition' is used to describe how the brain works and includes:
 - Attention
 - Memory
 - Processing of information
 - Visual Perception
 - Executive Functioning – decision making, planning, organizing, initiation, impulse control, flexible thinking

Cognitive Problems in PD

- Memory Problems
- Multitasking
- Slow Processing Speed
- Confusion
- Managing medications
- Cooking
- Falls
- Reduced awareness and safety
- Wandering

OT Assessment

- **Patient history**
- **Standardized and non-standardized**
 - Cognitive screens (when they needed/appropriate)
 - Neuropsychological testing (complex testing by Psychologists)
- **Functional Assessments**
 - ADLs and iADLS
- **Mobility Assessments** with cognitive tasks

Functional Strategies: General Strategies

- Reduce distractions
- Focus on one task at a time
- Finish one task before starting another
- Make to-do lists
- Keep a calendar and orientate yourself to the date every day
- Labels – kitchen, bathroom
- Signs

Functional Strategies: Personal Care

- Sit down to get dressed to reduce multitasking demand
- Wear easy to wear clothes if needed (pull over shirts, elastic waist pants)
- Use grab bars/seats in bathroom
- Shower around the same time and when you have energy

Functional Strategies: Medication

- With PD it is important to take your medications on time every time
 - Alarms
 - Reminders
 - Routine
 - Organizers
 - Blister Packs
 - Automatic dispensers

Functional Strategies: Household Management

- **Finances/bill payments**
 - Automatic payments
 - Paper vs electronic bills
 - Assistance from family
 - Power of Attorney
- **Grocery Shopping**
 - Make a list
 - Keep meals simple
 - Meal or Grocery delivery services

Functional Strategies: Safety

- Home Safety – kitchens, bathrooms
- Wandering Strategies
- Emergency Situations
- Decision making

What impacts cognition?

- Sleep
- Stress
- Hydration
- Brain Activities
- Exercise

Sleep

- The brain needs sleep to recover and function well
- Poor sleep impacts cognition and function

Bubu, OM et al. (2017).
Cavusoglu, C. et al. (2021).

Sleep Strategies

- Bladder – talk to your doctor
- Routine
 - Allow enough time to get sleep
 - Go to bed/wake up at the same time
- Limit Napping
- Relaxation
- Room set-up
- Exercise
- Exposure to daylight

Stress and Cognition

- Stress reduces brain function
- Difficulties concentrating
- Poor memory
- Confusion

Stress Strategies

- Keep life simple
- Work at reducing stress
- Manage stress with relaxation, exercise, routine, mindfulness
- Access supports
 - Health Care team, PD Connect, family/friends, Home support

Hydration

- **Drink more water!**
 - Have 2 glasses when you wake up
 - Have a glass with every meal and with your medications
 - Follow instructions from your doctor if you need to limit fluids

Mantantzis, K. et al (2021).
Edmonds, C, et al (2021).

Brain Activities

- **Keep your brain busy**
 - Reading/Audio books or Pod Casts
 - Games
 - Word Searches
 - Social Interactions
- **New activities/purpose**
 - Find new hobbies and add them to your schedule
 - Learn something new

Exercise

- Very important for brain health
- Helps keep a routine
- Helps with mood
- Improves strength and balance
- Helps with your sleep
- Start small and build over time

All Movement is Good Movement!

Take Home Messages

- Keep your brain active
- Get more sleep
- Drink more water
- Keep life simple and reduce stress
- Ask for help
- Exercise
- Talk to your Health Care Team for support

**Thank you for your
attention!**

Questions?

References

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