

**FROM:** The New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (Inc)

**Subject:** OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY IN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE: BETTER – SOONER – MORE CONVENIENT:

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The role of occupational therapy in primary health care with the aim of improving health outcomes for New Zealanders, is the focus of the New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (NZAOT) position statement launched today.

‘All New Zealanders have the right to quality primary health care services available from interprofessional teams which must include occupational therapists. This will ensure that a person’s and communities occupational needs are assessed and met,’ said Dr Kirk Reed, convenor of NZAOTs working party on occupational therapy and primary health care.

Reed explains that “Occupational therapy is a health profession which is concerned with the complex link between occupation and health. What and how we do the everyday things in our lives may be met with a range of personal or environmental barriers that need to be overcome, an occupational therapist will work with a person or community to overcome these barriers which will ultimately lead to improved health outcomes”.

The NZAOT position statement identifies the role of occupational therapy in primary health care which includes;

- **improving health by participation in occupation** through education, health promotion and counselling to help people adopt healthy lifestyles
- **maintaining health through participation in occupation** to prevent the onset or progression of disease or disability
- **restoring health when it affects their participation in occupation** by being the first point of access for people who are unwell or concerned about their health **assessing occupation-related health needs** of individuals, communities and populations
- **leading and participating in community development and health promotion initiatives** that have occupation as the means to or the intended outcome.
- **co-ordinating between and across services** and working within a collaborative interprofessional team to ensure continuity of care (Tse, Penman, Simms, 2003)
- **actively contributing to primary health organisations** by participating in their establishment, management, and community governance processes (Tse, Penman, Simms, 2003)

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For a copy of the Position Statement:

See: <http://www.nzaot.com/publications/position.statements.php>

The New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists: the professional association of occupational therapists in Aotearoa/new Zealand: Promoting excellence in knowledge, standards, support and representation.

See: [www.nzaot.com](http://www.nzaot.com)