

The New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (Inc)

Submission on

Pain Management Services Strategic Direction Information Paper

Preamble

This submission is sent on behalf of the New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (NZAOT) - the representative professional body for occupational therapists in New Zealand.

Occupational therapy is “ the art and science of enabling engagement in everyday living, through occupation; of enabling people to perform the occupations that foster health and well-being; and enabling a just and inclusive society so that all people may participate to their potential in the daily occupations of life” p. 372

Occupational therapists enable people to lead meaningful and satisfying lives through participation in occupation. The term 'occupation' is used in the widest sense - it is “...everything that people do to occupy themselves, including looking after themselves (self care), enjoying life (leisure), and contributing to the social and economic fabric of their communities (productivity); the domain of concern and the therapeutic medium of occupation therapy” p. 369¹.

Part of enabling people to participate in meaningful occupations may include setting goals using cognitive behavioural strategies; providing education focussing on pain management and by using pacing in order to manage daily activities (self care, leisure, domestic and vocational occupations).

Introduction

NZAOT is generally supportive of the outcomes of the Pain Management Services Strategic Direction Information Paper.

In particular – NZAOT endorses strongly the key service issues. Early intervention and ensuring psychosocial management is core to any successful pain management programme.

¹ Townsend, E.A., & Polatakjko, H. J. (2007). Enabling occupation II: Advancing an occupational therapy vision for health, well-being, & justice through occupation. Ottawa, Ontario: CAOT Publications ACE.

Specific suggestions/comments

1. Ensure all providers (including occupational therapists) have adequate experience, knowledge of chronic pain management support and integrate a cognitive behavioural approach to pain management. Minimally practitioners need to be a member of the NZ Pain Society. Additional postgraduate training/completion of case studies and investigation of a credentialing or accreditation framework might be useful.
2. Reinforce the interdisciplinary nature of pain management and reduce ring fencing in terms of stating who can deliver what components of pain management services – rather base it on knowledge and skills. Occupational therapists can and do provide cognitive behavioural approaches in pain management; are practical, clear at goals setting with clients and utilise activity to promote engagement. These skills are essential when working with clients with pain issues and who have changed life roles due to pain.
3. Integrate pain management services with vocational management services to ensure that a consistent chronic pain message is delivered - i.e. *hurt* does not equal harm, that time contingent activity that gradually increases is the best approach, and realistic outcomes are achieved – such as sustainable return to work.
4. Develop culturally specific pain management services, including age appropriate pain management services especially for adolescents.

Summary

The strategic direction information document recommendations are reasonable – however they do not go far enough in ensuring– that pain is best managed in an interdisciplinary, age and culturally appropriate psycho social model. NZAOT desires to ensure that pain management services are delivered in a consistent way – so that all providers are delivering the same message, and that providers have the knowledge and skills to deliver services.

Prepared by Siobhan Molloy, Bronwyn Thompson and Jane Kistiah-Chetty on behalf of the New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists

Contact : Siobhan Molloy, Executive Director NZAOT
Phone: 04 473 6510
Email: siobhan@nzaot.com

Date of Submission: 18 December, 2009



Siobhan Molloy
Executive Director NZAOT