

The COVID-19 Pandemic: Opportunities for Innovative Approaches in Occupational Therapy

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The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted vulnerable populations, imparting critical lessons. Policies like social distancing intended as one-size-fits-all solutions, have led to occupational disruption for some. These social and institutional changes have exacerbated occupational marginalization and deprivation among specific groups.

The pandemic has revealed that managing physical health alone does not ensure occupational health, nor does safeguarding the majority necessarily protect the vulnerable minority. Therefore, occupational therapy must focus on restoring the occupational health of these vulnerable groups and their communities, necessitating an evolution from individual intervention to encompassing collective needs and stakeholders.

Moreover, the pandemic has fostered innovative practices previously nonexistent. It has enabled the introduction of tele-support, daily living camp and family support models, and new forms of visiting interventions, highlighting that systems can be created through action, not just in preparation for it.

Throughout the pandemic, occupational therapy has engaged in various creative efforts targeting risk groups such as older adults, individuals with developmental disabilities, and at-risk youth. These initiatives have not only enhanced the clinical practice and education of occupational therapy but also promoted organized involvement, solidarity, and mutual growth.

The changes in occupational therapy during the pandemic have contributed to strengthening social solidarity and inclusiveness by focusing on the occupational deprivation of vulnerable individuals. This approach underscores the essential role of occupational therapy in enhancing the well-being of individuals and communities, demonstrating that even in challenging times like a pandemic, it can play a pivotal role in creating a healthy and resilient society where all members are involved and included.