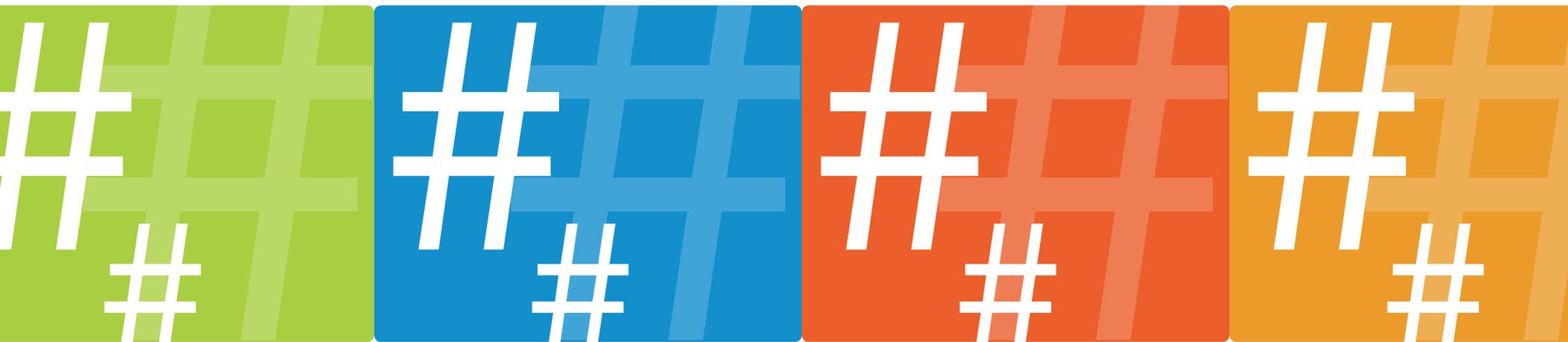


# Take Action for OT:

## An Advocacy Toolkit for CAOT-BC Members



#OT365

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# Introduction

Occupational therapists (OTs) understand the importance of “occupation” in life and it is up to us to deliver this message to our elected officials. Why? Because health care spending decisions are influenced by politicians.

For decades, occupational therapy has been a vital profession within health care that supports the long-term health, quality of life and the productivity of British Columbians.

Since first introducing guidelines for client-centred practice with the Department of National Health and Welfare in the 1980s, the practice has continually proven to be successful. So much so, that most health agencies, advocates and academics are calling for more movement toward client-centred practice in order to improve outcomes and reduce unnecessary expenditures.

OTs work with patients with a wide variety of physical, mental and cognitive conditions which can be episodic or chronic in nature, and require ongoing care. By looking at the environment, necessary tasks, skills, as well as educating the client/family, OTs work to increase participation in, and performance of, daily activities.

## Why is it important to make our views known?

All politicians want to be kept informed, hear people’s views, opinions and perceptions. We as British Columbians and occupational therapists should bring our positions and arguments to the attention of politicians and candidates running for political office, either in writing or in person, particularly during the time of an election.

## What are some of the key messages?

Occupational therapy is about equipping people for the job of living and thriving. That means being engaged and participating in all aspects of life, enjoying good health, wellness and contributing to British Columbia’s growth and prosperity.

### Occupational therapy interventions contribute to:

- individual health and wellness;
- family well-being;
- effectiveness and efficiency of the health care system;
- productivity of British Columbians; and
- the prosperity of communities and societies.

## Who are occupational therapists?

### Occupational therapists:

- are regulated health care professionals with graduate and post-graduate degrees;
- have been in professional practice for almost a century, since World War I;
- are ranked amongst the top 10 professions in North America by CNN and Forbes;
- provide interventions that have a high financial return on investment; and
- are in high demands and enjoy a 92% to 96% employment rate in Canada.

Notwithstanding these facts, accessibility to occupational therapy continues to be a problem.

## Take Action for OT

1. Write a letter to your MLA
2. Engage with your MLA at an all-candidate meeting
3. Follow CAOT-BC – on Twitter (@Caot\_bc), Facebook (@caotbc) and our blog - [www.caot-bc.blogspot.ca](http://www.caot-bc.blogspot.ca)
4. Vote on May 9th

## Problem

In British Columbia, occupational therapy services are not universally accessible to individuals who want them. Why? The main reasons are **a)** because occupational therapy services are not covered as part of extended health benefits by most public and private insurance plans and **b)** because of wait-lists in the public system to access services, in particular, services outside of the hospital setting.

- According to a 2013 National Physician Survey, undertaken by the College of Family Physicians, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Canadian Medical Association, over 61% of BC physicians were unhappy about difficulties in securing appointments for patients with publicly funded occupational therapists.
- The current ratio of 43 OTs per 100,000 British Columbians is far less than other provinces.
- Only 27% of the BC occupational therapy workforce is trained in BC. In order to fill the majority of OT positions in the province, there is an in-migration of therapists from outside of BC and Canada.



## How can you be part of the solution?

You can be part of the solution by simply asking for it! Ask for universal access to occupational therapy services in both the public and private sector.

### Public sector:

- Ask for more funding for occupational therapy services in the community to help offset long wait lists for vital services.
- Ask for a commitment to strengthen the occupational therapy workforce in BC by expanding occupational therapy training in BC.
- Ask for a commitment to increase the number of educational training seats in BC. Currently, the single program at University of British Columbia offers only 48 seats. We recommend that the number of seats be doubled to meet the needs of British Columbians.

### Private sector:

- Ask for occupational therapy to be included in extended health insurance plans.

## Who to ask?

- Candidates who are running for the office of member of legislative assembly (MLA) in your constituencies (residence, workplace).
- Candidates at “all-candidates meetings”. These meetings are advertised in your local newspapers or announced during radio and television broadcasts.
- Candidates when they knock at your door.
- The MLA in your riding (in person or via letter, see Appendix A).

To find out about your electoral district and candidates who are running in your riding, please visit: <http://www.elections.bc.ca>

## What to ask?

- If elected, will you support and increase in funding for occupational therapy services in community care?
- If elected, will you support an increase in the number of occupational therapy training seats in BC?

## Key Dates

<b>Writ Day</b> <i>The day the election is scheduled to be officially called.</i>	Tuesday, April 11
<b>General voter registration closes</b> <i>Registration by phone and online closes. Voters can still register when they vote.</i>	Tuesday, April 11 at 11:59:59 pm
<b>Candidate nomination deadline 1 pm Pacific time</b>	Tuesday, April 18
<b>Advance voting</b>	Saturday, April 29 – Sunday, April 30 (8 am to 8 pm local time)
<b>Advance voting</b>	Wednesday, May 3 – Saturday, May 6 (8 am to 8 pm local time)
<b>General voting day</b>	Tuesday, May 9 (8 am to 8 pm Pacific time)
<b>Initial count begins after 8 pm Pacific time</b> <i>Ballots cast under advance and general voting are counted, and preliminary results are announced.</i>	Tuesday, May 9
<b>Final count begins</b> <i>Absentee ballots are counted and final results are announced.</i>	Monday, May 22 – Wednesday, May 24
<b>Return day</b> <i>District electoral officers return the writs of election to the Chief Electoral Officer, ending the election period.</i>	Wednesday, May 31
<b>Election financing report filing deadline</b>	Tuesday, August 8

## Tools to assist you in your advocacy efforts

### Appendix A

Sample letter to MLA

### Appendix B

Top tips for meeting with elected officials

### Appendix C

Solutions for British Columbia: Access to occupational therapy services PowerPoint presentation

### Appendix D

Supporting evidence for occupational therapy services

### Appendix E

CAOT Position Statements

### Appendix F

Benefits of occupational therapy infographics

## Appendix A

### Sample letter to MLA

Write your MLA and ask for a meeting to discuss the value of occupational therapy and specifically your work as an occupational therapist. We are here to help and can support this request (e.g. attend with you or help you prepare).

You are welcome to personalize this letter to reflect your own views. Feel free to involve your clients, patients, other health care professionals, community leaders and concerned citizens in a letter writing campaign. Download your copy of the letter, <http://bit.ly/2oNMMvl>

Insert address

Insert date

Dear (Insert MLA's name):

My name is (insert your name) and I am writing to you as your constituent and as an occupational therapist. For nearly a century, occupational therapists (OTs) who are regulated health care professionals have been supporting the health, well-being and quality of life of British Columbians. OTs have been contributing to the productivity of BC residents through evidence-proven, cost-effective interventions, client-centred care and increasing efficiencies to reduce unnecessary health care expenditures.

Client-centred health care is the underpinning of the profession of occupational therapy. Occupational therapists work with clients in a wide range of settings with a variety of physical, mental and cognitive conditions that are chronic or episodic in nature. Through assessment, and provision of resources, tools and supports, OTs are able to unleash an individual's potential, so that s/he can participate and thrive in daily life, in his or her environment, and "manage" the business of "daily functioning and living".

With more investments being made in home and community care, primary care, mental health and seniors care, the demand for occupational therapy services will only increase. Without measures to strengthen the occupational therapy workforce, we will not be able to meet the increased demands for occupational therapy programs and services for British Columbians. Currently there are just 48 occupational therapists graduating from the UBC Faculty of Medicine, Department of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy program every year. That is simply not enough to support the expansion of team-based care across the health sector. As a result, we are forced to recruit from other provinces or even other countries. What is needed is increased funding to train occupational therapists right here at home.

Occupational therapists are integral parts of interdisciplinary teams, and offer practice and interventions that complement and enhance a team-based model of care. Investment in occupational therapy enables British Columbians living with injury, illness and/or disability to maintain their abilities and independence so they can remain healthy, happy, and independent.

Other organizations also support the need for more access to occupational therapy including the BC Office of the Seniors Advocate. A recent report indicated that more than 90% of seniors who live in residential care do not receive the required minimum of 15 minutes of occupational therapy care every seven days. The BC Care Providers Association report, "Strengthening Seniors Care: A Made-in-BC Roadmap", says the overall quality of life and care of seniors would be improved with more occupational and other therapies. Inclusion BC's report "Kids Can't Wait" found there are excessive wait times for early intervention services provided by OTs and Pain BC has repeatedly called for more access to allied health services such as occupational therapy to support British Columbians who live with chronic pain as the province grapples with the opioid crisis.

I am calling on you to make a commitment to strengthen the occupational therapy workforce by expanding the number of occupational training seats in BC to double the current number. I would be pleased to speak to you further on this issue that is very important to me.

Yours sincerely,

Signature



## Appendix B

### Top tips for meeting with elected officials

Meeting with elected officials and those running for office is a great way for occupational therapists to communicate on important issues. Through these interactions, you can provide valuable education about occupational therapy. Here are a few tips to help you and your audience get the most out of your meeting.

We are here to help you. Contact [caotbc@caot.ca](mailto:caotbc@caot.ca) to support you to set up and/or prepare the meeting.

### Pre-arranged meeting

- ✓ **Be prepared and on time.** If you have arranged a meeting with your MLA or a candidate, you will likely have 20-30 minutes at most. Their schedules are very busy, so be prepared and ready to present your information. Bring printed materials with you, but keep them brief and easy to scan/read;
- ✓ **Dress professionally;**
- ✓ State your name, profession and professional affiliation and be sure to **identify yourself as a very engaged constituent;**
- ✓ **Make your presentation brief and clear.** Select only 1-2 key messages—ask yourself, if they only take away one thing from your meeting, what should that be? Organize your presentation around those 1-2 key messages;
- ✓ **Send additional information** that may have been requested.

### All-candidates meeting or other community event

- ✓ Ask any questions in a **brief and concise manner;**
- ✓ **Indicate what actions** you want MLAs or candidates to take;
- ✓ **Use local examples and stories to support your position** and make the story meaningful and relevant to the audience (while respecting anonymity and privacy);
- ✓ **Follow-up** with the MLA after the election;
- ✓ **Send additional information** that may have been requested.

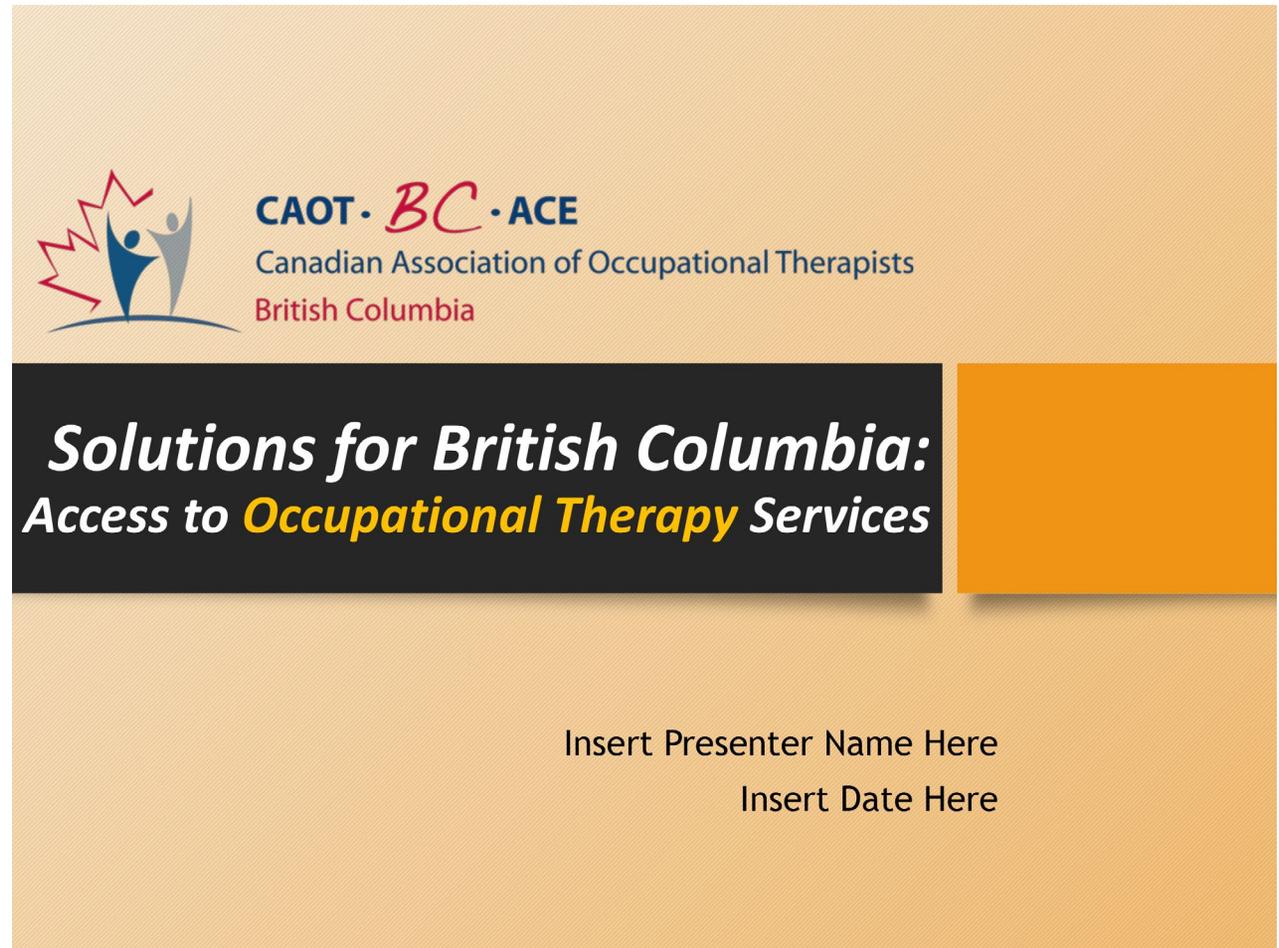


## Appendix C

### Solutions for British Columbia: Access to occupational therapy services presentation

CAOT-BC has prepared a PowerPoint slide deck for our members to use during the BC Election 2017 so they can Take Action for OT.

Download your copy of the presentation here: <http://bit.ly/2lihUxO>



## Appendix D

### Supporting evidence for occupational therapy services

Higher hospital spending on occupational therapy is associated with lower readmission rates<sup>1</sup>.

- This study examined 30-day readmission rates for heart failure, pneumonia, and acute myocardial infarction at over 2,000 American hospitals.
- Nineteen spending categories were considered including pharmacy, medical/surgical supplies, physical therapy, occupational therapist, speech pathology, etc.
- Average spending on occupational therapy per patient was relatively low (\$12-\$20).
- Primary study finding: **Occupational therapy is the only spending category where additional spending has a statistically significant association with lower admission rates for the three medical conditions** (heart failure, pneumonia, and acute myocardial infarction).
- Occupational therapists focus on whether a patient can be safely discharged into his or her environment, and services address a range of factors that affect patient health outside

<sup>1</sup> Rogers, A. T., Bai, G., Lavin, R. A., & Anderson, G. F. (2016). Higher hospital spending on occupational therapy is associated with lower readmission rates. *Medical Care Research and Review*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077558716666981>

of the hospital (such as ADL needs and social environment).

- In this way, **occupational therapy is well positioned to address risk factors for readmissions.**

### What does this mean for BC?

- Hellsten, E., Liu, G., Yue, E., Gao, G., & Sutherland, J. M. (2016). Improving hospital quality through payment reforms A policy impact analysis in British Columbia. *Healthcare Management Forum*, 29 (1), 33-38.
- This study conducted by UBC's School of Population and Public Health examined readmission rates for 18 BC hospitals for the same three conditions (heart failure, pneumonia and acute MI).
  - Researchers estimated that between 2010 and 2013, **readmissions cost the province of BC \$13 million**, not including physician fees.
  - **Increased hospital spending on occupational therapy could save the province of BC millions of dollars.**

<sup>1</sup> Hellsten, E., Liu, G., Yue, E., Gao, G., & Sutherland, J. M. (2016). Improving hospital quality through payment reforms A policy impact analysis in British Columbia. *Healthcare Management Forum*, 29 (1), 33-38.

## Don't forget!

The Electronic Health Library of BC (e-HLbc) provides the academic and health care community of British Columbia with easy access to online health library resources. CAOT-BC joined e-HLbc in early 2016 in order to support our members to achieve excellence in their practice.

You can log into e-HLbc directly from the CAOT-BC home page ([www.caot.ca](http://www.caot.ca))

Electronic Health Library of BC  
**e-HLbc**

## Appendix E

### CAOT Position Statements

CAOT develops position statements and maintains their currency and accuracy so that they can be used as communication tools for advocacy purposes to increase knowledge and raise awareness about occupational therapy amongst decision makers. Information in position statements, such as recommended actions, serve to support occupational therapists in the evolution of their practice.

Access published positions statements here:  
[http://www.caot.ca/site/pt/caot\\_posn\\_stmt?nav=sidebar](http://www.caot.ca/site/pt/caot_posn_stmt?nav=sidebar)

- Autism spectrum disorders and occupational therapy (2015)
- Occupational Therapy and Aboriginal Health (2011)
- Occupational Therapy and End-of-Life Care (2011)
- Occupational Therapy and Home & Community Care (2016)
- Occupational Therapy and Mental Health Care (2008)
- Occupational Therapy and Older adults (2011)



## Appendix F

### Benefits of occupational therapy infographics

Share these 4 infographics about occupational therapy through social media platforms including: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and more.

Be sure to use the #OT365 hashtag.

# BC NEEDS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, EVERYWHERE

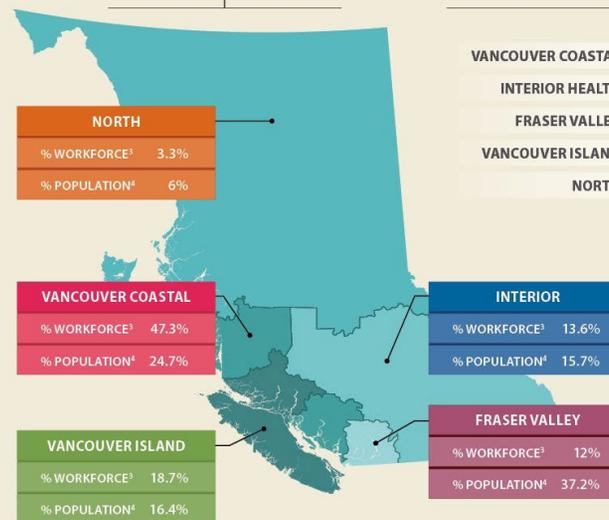
Although a key health-care provider, wait-lists for some occupational therapy (OT) services can be over one year. The OT workforce is not large enough to serve all BC communities. We need to train and hire occupational therapists in these areas to deliver this vital healthcare service for seniors, children with autism and other people with disabilities. Occupational therapy works.



**61.6%**  
of BC physicians  
indicate **unsatisfactory**  
access to publicly funded  
occupational therapists<sup>1</sup>

### Where OTs work and should work

(Primary Region of Employment - February 2016)



### Wait times for OT services: children<sup>2</sup>



**1,688**  
children referred  
(2015)

1. National Physician Survey, 2013.  
2. Provincial Advocate for BC Association for Child Development & Intervention  
3. College of Occupational Therapists of BC (February 2016)  
4. BC Stats Population Estimates, Sub-provincial (2015)



Enabling British Columbians for the occupations of life.

[www.caot.ca](http://www.caot.ca)



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## BETTER CARE, BETTER VALUE

Occupational Therapists (OTs) are high-value healthcare practitioners who work with patients in hospitals, care homes and in the community to minimize the impacts of chronic health issues on individuals and communities. Whether it's a senior with dementia, a child with autism, or someone with a physical or psychological disability, OTs can help people live healthier, safer and more fulfilling lives.



### INCREASE the number of OTs trained in BC

- To meet public and private sector demands
- To reduce reliance on the fluctuating and unpredictable supply of OTs trained outside of BC and internationally trained OTs
- To privilege highly talented British Columbians whose desired career goal is as an OT

#### EXAMPLES OF ADDED OT VALUE



### Adults/Seniors

- Increase OT staffing to reduce caseload burden
- Preventative home safety visits for high and very high MAPLe<sup>1</sup>
- Design programming, delegate and assign tasks to PSW, RA other less costly health workers

### Add OT to skill mix in residential care facilities...



**SEATING**  
decrease in falls



**SKIN HEALTH**  
decrease in pressure sores



**EATING**  
increase in functional eating



**ENGAGEMENT**  
in meaningful activities

1. Method of Assigning Priority Levels<sup>1</sup>- A decision-support tool used to prioritize clients needing community-or facility-based services



### Did you know?

BC residents provide a consistent, highly qualified applicant pool for the single education program (UBC)



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## FALLS KILL, BUT THEY DON'T HAVE TO

Occupational therapists (OTs) can work with seniors and property owners to make their spaces safer, reducing the costly results of a fall (such as emergency visits, surgery and increased insurance premiums.)

### Falls...<sup>2</sup>

- are the leading cause of injury-related deaths and hospitalizations for BC seniors
- are the most common cause of injury among BC seniors
- cause devastating effects: loss of mobility, reduced quality of life, and even death
- cost the BC health system \$195M directly in health care spending



**200,000**  
seniors will experience  
one or more falls  
each year



### Did you know?

**50% of falls** happen in the home.<sup>1</sup>



### SOLUTION

### Prevention is key!

OTs are experts in home modifications. Home assessments by OTs are shown to prevent falls.

1. [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/injury-blessure/seniors\\_falls-chutes\\_aines/index-eng.php#s2-1-](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/injury-blessure/seniors_falls-chutes_aines/index-eng.php#s2-1-)  
2. <http://www.injuryresearch.bc.ca/quick-facts/seniors-falls-prevention/>



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## ENABLING SENIORS TO STAY AT HOME

Occupational therapists (OTs) work with seniors to live better, healthier and more fulfilling lives by helping them remain independent — shaping the world around their abilities. Helping seniors live at home saves the healthcare system money.

