



TUCSIN ALUMNI 2013

Career Focus - OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

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If you like helping people, solving problems, and having a lot of variety in your job, consider becoming an occupational therapist (OT). You'll use many types of knowledge and skills while helping people of all ages learn or relearn to do the activities that matter most to

them in their daily lives and your career opportunities look bright!

What is an Occupational Therapist?

Occupational therapy is an exciting and challenging profession because each patient has individual requirements and the treatment needs are constantly changing. Occupational therapy is a constantly developing profession.

Occupational therapists are unique members of the health team. They enable people of all ages to function within their physical, psychological and social limitations and to regain or maintain their maximum potential with regard to personal care, work and leisure.

They are concerned with people who are treated through active participation in purposeful activities in order to enable them to regain their health, return to their community and to enjoy quality of life. These therapists use a problem-solving approach by first scientifically assessing patients' physical and mental abilities. In this way problems that may affect the way in which patients are able to care for themselves, hold down a job, attend school or participate in games or sport and utilize their leisure time, are identified.

Treatment plans are specifically designed for patients, taking into account their individual needs and backgrounds. Activities are chosen for their potential to help each patient reach predetermined treatment objectives. Thus, the patients contribute to their own recovery by becoming actively involved. In the case of permanent disability, patients are taught how to use their remaining skills.

Sometimes occupational therapists need to make suggestions with regard to adaptations to patients' living and working environments, or to provide them with adapted devices to enable them to function more independently. These therapists can also play a preventative role through treatment programmes in deprived communities.

Programmes may be devised for the improvement of physical functions such as power and dexterity of the hands; improvement of mental health, such as social adaptability; improvement in self-care, self-management and personal independence; and promotion of the normal development in a sick or disabled person.

Occupational therapists use everyday activities as a treatment medium. Activities include personal management activities, work activities, recreational activities and play activities. The tools and equipment used are in accordance with each activity.

The main aim of occupational therapy is to help a person to regain self-confidence and to be able to act independently in spite of physical, psychological and social limitations.

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OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST - Education and Career Paths



Occupational therapists work with young children, adolescents, adults and older people in these areas:

- physical rehabilitation
- mental health services
- learning disability
- primary care
- paediatrics
- environmental adaptation
- care management
- equipment for daily living
- research posts

Some satisfying aspects of this career

- working with people
- variety and challenge of the work
- reward of seeing disadvantaged and disabled individuals improve their skills
- opportunities for initiative, innovation and creativity in problem-solving

Some demanding aspects of this career

- poor remuneration
- lack of recognition from the public and other professions
- dealing with depressed patients

Requirements

An occupational therapist should:

- have a highly developed sense of responsibility;
- be sensitive and have empathy;
- have emotional stability;
- be patient and have perseverance;
- have a good sense of humour;
- have a desire to work with people;
- be willing to get involved with disabled people;

- possess good health and physical stamina;
- be creative and have original ideas for problem-solving;
- be practical and have manual dexterity.

School Subjects

National Senior Certificate meeting degree requirements for a degree course. Each institution will have its own minimum entry requirements.

Compulsory Subjects: Mathematics, Physical Sciences
Recommended Subjects: Life Sciences, Visual Arts, Music

Training

Degree: BOccupational Therapy or BSc (Occupational Therapy) - UKZN, US, UL, UCT, UFS, Wits. The duration of the course is 4 years.

Prospective students as well as qualified occupational therapists must register with the Interim Medical and Dental Council of Namibia. The Occupational Therapy Association of South Africa promotes the interests of the profession.

Employer

- General hospitals
- Psychiatric hospitals
- Special schools for physically disabled children
- Special schools for children with behavioural and learning problems
- Homes for the aged
- Training centres for the mentally handicapped
- Non-governmental organisations
- Universities
- Specialized units such as workmen's rehabilitation units
- Welfare organisations
- Self-employment, in own private practice

Where to study OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ?

University of Stellenbosch - OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY



Admission requirements

- Write the National Benchmark Tests AQL and MAT
- For the NSC an aggregate of at least 50%
- Mathematics 3
- Life Sciences 4
- Afrikaans and Physical Sciences as school subjects are strongly recommended

- About 50 candidates are selected in the year preceding study. See "[Application and selection](#)".

Occupational Therapy is a dynamic and exciting profession. This programme equips you with the knowledge and skills to assess and design effective interventions for persons of all age groups with developmental delays, with different diagnoses and with functional deficits. Activity is used as the method of intervention. The intervention programmes are designed for application in home environments and in community settings with the aim to enable the persons to obtain optimal occupational performance. These programmes rehabilitate and prevent functional problems, and promote the overall health of clients.

The training of occupational therapists

This is a four-year programme. The first year of the programme is presented at the Stellenbosch Campus and the rest of the programme at the Tygerberg Campus. The programme comprises a study of Occupational Therapy (theory and practice), Psychology, Sociology, Special Physics, Industrial Psychology, Biology, Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology for Allied Health Sciences, Epidemiology and Statistics.

This programme is followed by a year of community service after which you will be eligible for registration as Occupational Therapist with the Health Professions Council of South Africa.

APPLICATION FORMS

Applicants can apply electronically at www.maties.com

Telephone numbers

General enquiries (Client Service Centre): +27 21 808 9111

