

Habits & Health Promotion in OT: A Scoping Review

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Chronic diseases are prevalent worldwide, indicating a need for disease prevention and a focus on health promotion. Globally, 74% of deaths are attributed to four lifestyle diseases: cardiovascular diseases, cancer, respiratory diseases, and diabetes (WHO, 2022). Occupational therapists are uniquely trained in habits and environmental adaptation, with the profession's very roots in habit training. In order to identify future research avenues to direct occupational therapy's role in habit change to promote health, this scoping review answered the question: What is the state of the occupational therapy literature with regards to health promotion and habits? (Epley et al., 2021). Scoping reviews represent an ideal research design when there is limited existing research, such as the topic at hand (Levac et al., 2010). This review was guided by a rigorous team protocol for scoping reviews set forth by the Joanna Briggs Institute Manual for Evidence Synthesis (Peters et al., 2020). Accordingly, a team approach was undertaken for all steps of the review including article selection, data charting, and authorship. Results of the review revealed a common theme across the 20 sources: the expertise of occupational therapists in environmental adaptation, underscoring the unique role of occupational therapy in promoting habits that prevent disease and support health. Additionally, the review noted gaps in the literature including a paucity of research on the role of occupational therapy using environmental analysis and modification to support habit change. Because habits fall clearly within the domain and scope of occupational therapy, there is a need for further research within the field to guide best practices in habit change and to empower the profession as habit experts. Given our expertise in the environmental adaptations which support health habits, occupational therapy stands poised to make a powerful impact in promoting health at the person, group, and population levels.

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