Occupational Therapy Plays Critical Role in Healthy Ageing

Delegates at the annual conference of the Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) will today, Friday 27th April, be presented with findings of a study that shows occupational therapists have a critical role to play in supporting healthy ageing and in enabling older people to maintain their health and independence for longer. The study highlighted how occupational therapists can support small, healthy lifestyle changes and involvement in meaningful activities which are critical to healthy ageing.

“The study shows that by helping older people to maintain a mix of physical, social, productive and spiritual activities as they age, Occupational Therapy can slow the decline normally associated with ageing and is a cost-effective method of enabling older individuals to maintain their health and independence at home”, said Katie Cremin, AOTI Spokesperson.

Keynote Speaker at the conference, Professor Jeanne Jackson, now Head of Occupational Therapy at University College Cork, will present the findings of her US study which researched the impacts of Occupational Therapy on older people living in the community. The study developed a new Occupational Therapy programme called ‘Lifestyle Redesign’ that helped older people acquire health-promoting habits and routines in their daily life, which improved their health and well-being.
The study had an emphasis on prevention and non-pharmacologic interventions and showed that the Occupational Therapy ‘Lifestyle Redesign’ programme had a very positive effect on the physical and mental health of older people in the study. Participants reported an increase in their level of independence, life satisfaction and vitality and a decrease in symptoms of depression and bodily pain.

“Occupational Therapy programmes such as the ‘Lifestyle Redesign’ programme are also beneficial for people with chronic physical or mental health conditions. Occupational therapists support people to adjust to the impacts on their lives of chronic conditions and enable them to live a life that is satisfying and meaningful despite their condition”, continued Cremin.

“This year’s conference, in addition to exploring occupational therapists’ role in healthy ageing, will focus on new research and practices that occupational therapists are using to help people to maintain their independence and quality of life despite the effects of illness, injury, disability or ageing”, concluded Cremin.

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Note for Editors
1. The Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI) is the professional body for Occupational Therapy in Ireland.
2. The AOTI annual conference will take place on Friday 27th and Saturday 28th April in the Mullingar Park Hotel with the theme of Occupation – our unique focus. In addition to key note addresses and research paper presentations for delegates, a free exhibition of rehabilitation equipment, mobility aids and assistive technology is open to the public on Saturday 28th April from 11.30am – 1pm and 2pm – 3pm.
3. Prof Jackson’s study, called the Well Elderly 2 trial, was performed between 2004 and 2009 and the results were recently published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.