

ERMAT - Platform

Development of a Training Program for the Improvement of Quality of Life of Elder Persons with Reduced Mobility Through the Exploitation of Assistive Technologies



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Mobility is defined as the ability of an individual to purposively move about her environment. Mobility limitations, or Reduced Mobility, are impairments in movement and affect between one third and one half of adults age 65 or older. Mobility is an important predictor of Quality of Life (QoL) among Elder Persons and a measure of successful aging. Assistive Technologies (ATs) may promote the functionality of Elderly Persons with Reduced Mobility (EPRM), aiming at their autonomy, independence, QoL and social inclusion.

Croatian Association of Occupational Therapists (H.U.R.T.) is a national, professional association which promotes interests of Occupational Therapists, ethics in occupational therapy profession and quality of occupational therapy services in the Republic of Croatia. In the past 20 years Association is participating in different projects on national and international level as a form of developing and attuning practices to occupational therapy practices all over the world.

Croatian Association of Occupational Therapists (H.U.R.T.) is a partner on the European project ERMAT (Development of a Training Program for the Improvement of Quality of Life of Elder Persons with Reduced Mobility Through the Exploitation of Assistive Technologies). Centrul IT pentru Stiinta si Tehnologie (CITST – Romania) is coordinating the ERMAT project which aims to increase the competences (knowledge, skills, acceptance) of Elderly Persons with Reduced Mobility, Informal Caregivers and Professionals towards the application of Assistive Technologies. The training materials and practical training activities designed during the ERMAT project will become available through an open-access e-Training platform. E-Training platform has different Designed Practical Training Activities (DPTA) necessary for facilitating independence.

Designed Practical Training Activities (DPTA) „FEEDING MYSELF” is the 2nd course activity developed as a part of the project ERASMUS+ ERMAT. The DPTA is structured according in total duration of 24 hours, of which: contains 12 hours are face to face sessions, 6 hours are online sessions using the ERMAT e-training platform and 6 hours dedicated to assignments. DPTA is carried out following an active, participative methodology, which is adapted to the needs of elderly people with reduced mobility functions.

The training of DPTA 2 aims at increasing knowledge and practical skills of EPRM related to the use of assistive technologies for their preparing food and self-feeding activities. After the workshop we hope for EPRM to

- Be more aware of the use and application of ATs in self-feeding and eating
- Know how to find more information on ATs for specific mobility difficulties
- Increase their autonomy thanks to the use of ATs
- Be able to access an online learning platform and use digital contents
- Feel more comfortable by conversing with peers in an online environment



Self-feeding is a basic life skill throughout the lifespan. Individuals may experience cognitive and physical changes as they age that can impact their ability to independently self-feed. Self-feeding is an ADL within the scope of practice of occupational therapy that can be assessed and modified to maximize independence. As people age, self-feeding is an ADL that can be affected due to a variety of medical conditions that impact motor and/or processing skills. Individuals with cognitive or physical dysfunction can decline in independence with self-feeding tasks due to their conditions. Conditions that may impact self-feeding independence include, but are not limited to: arthritis, Parkinson's disease, dementia, cerebral vascular accident (CVA), multiple sclerosis, limitations of active range of motion in bilateral upper extremities, decreased fine motor control in hands, decreased vision, and difficulty concentrating during tasks. Occupational therapists can positively influence a person's independence with self-feeding through the use of their unique skill set by adapting the equipment and the environment, and/or educating the client on compensatory techniques.

These have been key point which have guided an group of occupational therapy professionals in developing materials for supporting family members and elderly to be independent in instrumental daily activities in kitchen.



Our experience has showed that bringing OT closer to other fields of expertise was through direct problem solving or teaching the clients in their presence, the challenges upon which the other professionals have come upon (PT, nurses, community based palliative care professionals).

ENERGY SAVING TECHNIQUES AND KITCHEN / SHOPPING EFFICIENCY

- Use online food shopping
- Schedule your shopping throughout the week with the goal of carrying a lighter load
- Use a roller with a basket / backpack / wheeled bag for shopping
- Create a shopping list by dividing items by categories (fruits, vegetables, meat, dairy products, etc.) so that they do not return to the same places more than once / use categorized ready-made templates
- Gather all the necessary ingredients and cooking utensils before you start cooking
- Sit during preparatory cooking methods (peeling, cutting, chopping)

ERMAT logo and European Union logo.

The choice of feeding was not an surprise as we are experts in daily living. Occupation of feeding is for us as professionals an meaningful area (occupation based approach in our doings) connected the strenght based approach (we know how feeding can change) resulted in divergent solutions for elderly population

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Make life in the kitchen safer!

<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/63663/63663-hi.htm>

Face to face sessions

Face to face sessions with practical and experiential activities in real scenarios explored the competencies and ensured development of needed strategies to recognise importance of feeding/eating as an activity and establishing proper habits, needs and routines, show EPRM importance of proper positioning in feeding activity and importance of being able to do feeding on their own when possible, present assistive technologies that can help people with their feeding challenges and the role of informal caregivers and professionals for enhancing EPRM autonomy. These sessions might include visits to residential facilities, AT provider facilities or homes where ATs are implemented.

Homework

Home assignments including a practical approach with study cases, videos, expert seminars and complementary readings.

Virtual, online sessions

Virtual, online sessions are present to ensure transfer of knowledge but also development of IT skills in elderly person. This session includes a webinar of 40 minutes and individual online activities for 20 minutes. During the session instructors provide information for caretakers to support a person in independent using of the materials.

Conclusion would be that with other professionals we can show the potential of occupational therapy in terms of achieving client's which is important for all team that may have been unattainable for other professionals within their profession, but achievable for us sometimes we can step in with our skills/knowledge and promote OT.