

Work-Able News

April 2012



Work-Able SOLUTIONS
Occupational Therapy Consulting Services

Welcome Pamela Whaley



Pam completed her Master of Occupational Therapy degree at the University of Manitoba in 2011. Prior to her training in OT, Pam worked in the education system with children requir-

ing special assistance, and was an active volunteer with youth in her community. As a research coordinator at the University of Manitoba she has developed solid research skills through numerous projects related to OT practice. This experience has enhanced her commitment to evidence-based occupational therapy. Pam's occupational therapy internships provided a wide range of experiences in urban and rural environments, with individuals of all ages, from nursery schools to a geriatric rehabilitation unit, with needs ranging from

acute hand injury to chronic mental health concerns. Coming from a small northern town, Pam has many interesting work and life experiences that have contributed to her positive and solution-oriented attitude. With interests in the built-environment, adaptive technology, and ergonomics, Pam brings a fresh approach and positive energy to our team. We are very pleased to be able to offer her OT skills to our clients.

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OT in the News

On March 16, our own Leslie Johnson appeared on Breakfast Television to talk about OT and ergonomics. As an instructor of OT students at the University of Manitoba, Leslie has created a curriculum that ensures students are well-prepared to practice in the field of ergonomics upon completion of their Masters degree. One of her project assignments includes conducting office ergonomic

assessments on real-life volunteers/employees at the University. Fortunately for the students, there is no shortage of volunteers for this project! However, the use of social media during the volunteer recruitment process was also picked up by Breakfast Television, leading Leslie to her television debut. If you did not see it, she did a fantastic job! In the past few years, there has been a dramatic

shift in the way many of us work, with increasing demand for the use of computers and technology. Unfortunately, our workstations and work habits may not have changed to reflect this. The impact of this on our bodies is well-researched, and there is ample evidence that a properly set-up, or *ergonomic* workstation, is an important factor in reducing the risk of injury.

At Work.
At Home.
Every Day.

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Enhancing Function. Preventing Injury.

Focus On: How can an occupational therapy home visit help?

Written By Pamela Whaley



Touch pad

Source: www.ergocanada.com

It's likely that a person seen by Work-Able Solutions for a home visit has already seen several health care providers, and maybe even an occupational therapist or two. They may have even discussed and planned for some of the anticipated difficulties of managing in the home. This is of course a good thing; however, not all barriers and difficulties can be predicted, as each person and their home environ-

ments are unique. Therefore, home assessments need to cover a multitude of factors, and cannot all be done from outside of the home or simulated in hospitals or clinics. The home visit is necessary to get the best individualized assessment, and to make changes that work in a real way for each person within their home.

When conducting a home visit, the occupational thera-

pist is observing both what tasks are difficult for their client and also how the client's home environment may be contributing to the difficulties. Once problem areas are identified, the occupational therapist will figure out either how to change the way a task is done or how to modify the physical environment to support successful completion of the task.

“Not all barriers and difficulties can be predicted, as each person and their home environments are unique”

The Home Visit and Computer Access

There are many tasks and activities that an occupational therapist considers during a home visit; too many to describe in one newsletter! Therefore, we have chosen one area to highlight in this newsletter: computer access.

The computer has become a very important piece of technology in many homes, increasing ease and efficiency in completing daily activities and providing a source of entertainment. For a person who has sustained an injury or who's ability to go out of the home has been changed, a computer can become even more important; allowing banking, shopping, work, and even socializing to be done without leaving the home.

However, if these same people are also limited in how they can access and use the computer, whether due to their hand/arm function, cognitive abilities, or a visual impairment, an occupational therapist knows how to adapt the computer to that person's needs.

A key device for accessing and using the computer is the mouse. There are many different types and styles of computer mice, and the technology is steadily changing and innovating. An assessment at the computer station takes into account a person's unique abilities, computer needs, and home computer environment to find the best fit.

The *Touch Pad* is ideal for a person with limited use of their arm, wrist, or hand. The touch pad can be used in place of a conventional mouse. With relatively little set-up, this mouse alternative can be individualized for a person's needs and preferences with programmable areas and buttons to perform the specific commands or launch sites that the user needs most with just one tap. Also, if fewer functions are the way to go, a touch pad can be set up with a select number of functions. As the touch pad is a stationary device, it can be affixed to a wheelchair tray or can be used in bed, and can be set up at the most comfortable angle for the user, even vertically.



Joy Stick

Source: www.ergocanada.com

A Joy-Stick can be used by people with limited hand control and dexterity, tremors or muscle spasms, and motor skill difficulties, and is commonly used by children and people with special education needs. The ball of the joy-stick fits securely in the palm and requires only small and light movements to operate; allowing for precision commands without requiring the use of dexterous hand and finger movements. Once the base is fixed to a surface, joy-stick mice are very stable, and they are often built to be very durable. Mouse buttons are located near the joy-stick, are color coded for visual memory, and can be switched for left- and right-hand use.

The Head Mouse can help someone who does not have use of their hand/arm, or is unable to use a conventional mouse or touch pad. This device is frequently used with individuals with a high level spinal cord injury who have good head and neck control. A wireless optical sensor attached to the computer receives movement information from a very small disposable "target" that is affixed to the person's head, glasses, or hat. The user's head motions will move the cursor on-screen, just as the user's hand movements would with a standard mouse. An adjunct sip-and-puff or switch device can be used to make a mouse selection, or software can be set up to do the single/

double-click mouse function simply by holding the cursor over the desired on-screen area for a selectable period of time. An on-screen keyboard can also be set up for use with the head mouse. This mouse alternative allows a person to use their computer with great independence, requiring only a little assistance for set-up.

There are many more types of computer adaptive devices, and many more styles of computer mice— Talk with an occupational therapist to find out more!

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Eagan, M. (2003). Occupational therapy at home and in the community for people with sub-acute conditions. *OT Now* 5(9): 1-5.



Head Mouse

Source: www.abilitynet.org.uk/edu_physicalhardware

“A computer can become even more important; allowing banking, shopping, work, and even socializing to be done without leaving the home”

Return To Work Update

A number of people have asked me: Are you back at work yet? And, the answer is: Yes! I had a wonderful break from work with my daughter, and am really enjoying parenthood. Actually, I have been back at work for some time now, and have a new appreciation for the all too common struggle of finding the best work-life balance. I can't help thinking that this learning will gradually find its way into my OT practice.

Thank you to all of our clients for your ongoing support, we appreciate it!

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Work-Able Solutions is a leading provider of occupational therapy and ergonomic consulting services in Manitoba. We have been in operation since 1998, and have been successful in providing evidence-based, cost-effective services of the highest professional standards.

Work-Able Solutions offers occupational therapy programs that are goal-oriented and promote positive functional outcomes. Rehabilitation services are aimed at assisting adults who have sustained an injury, illness, or disability, achieve their maximum level of function and safely return to work and activities of daily living. Workplace intervention services are designed to prevent injury, improve wellness and productivity, and facilitate accommodation of workers with disabilities.

- Ergonomic Risk Assessment (Office and Industrial)
- Job Demands Analysis
- Worksite Assessment and Accommodation
- Functional Capacity Evaluation
- Personal Care Assistance Needs Assessment
- Home / Activities of Daily Living Assessment
- Cognitive Assessment
- Return to Work Programs
- Acquired Brain Injury Rehabilitation Programs
- Chronic Pain Programs
- Ergonomics Workshops
- Employee Training and Wellness Workshops

Our Consultants



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