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Introduction

CAOT and AOTA came together to solve a problem created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

CarFit is an educational program for older adults. It teaches person-vehicle fit, builds awareness of aftermarket solutions and provides community-specific driving resources. CarFit, created by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA), with the American Automobile Association and AARP, provides occupational therapy practitioners with a proactive entry point regarding the occupation of driving. CarFit Canada was adopted in 2014 by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) and the Canadian Automobile Association. CarFit enables occupational therapy practitioners to expand from the home environment to community by addressing the vehicle as a valued environment.

? Why do OTs avoid the car?



Leg weakness and rise from toilet



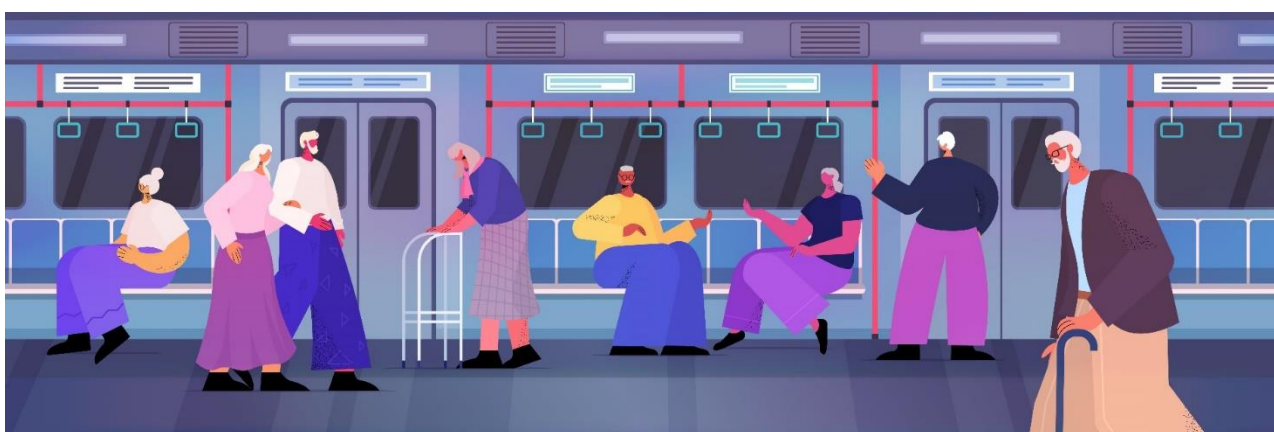
Leg weakness and rise from car

Managing one's environment is OT.

CarFit empowers occupational therapy practitioners to intervene in the vehicle, not just in the home. Occupational therapy can easily address the “fit” of the toilet to enable toileting, but why would we avoid the car?

CarFit broadens the perspective to intervene and focuses on the fit of our client's engagement to include driving in daily life. CarFit builds occupational therapy confidence and skills, and the public sees our problem-solving skills as helpful.

? Who asks: How do you get around?



Asking the right questions is OT.

CarFit empowers occupational therapy practitioners to intervene with community mobility. Asking the question, “How do you get around?” is a positive way for OTs to start conversations about how older drivers safely mobilize and access their communities.

? How is CarFit a helpful fit for OT?



Addressing prevention and health promotion is OT.

CarFit empowers occupational therapy practitioners to integrate transportation considerations across the lifespan for drivers and adopt a model of intervention that promotes participation in community mobility, a vital component of health and well-being. CarFit is preventative and proactive healthcare.

- 🚗 CarFit is helpful for older drivers.
- 🚗 CarFit is helpful for teen drivers.
- 🚗 Including the instrumental activity of daily living (IADL) of driving begins when OT considers the car as a valued environment.
- 🚗 Simply put, CarFit is helpful for all drivers of personal vehicles.

! COVID-19 Pandemic

Shifting to meet the needs of our clients is OT.

CarFit responded and adapted. We share and invite both your interest and participation in the universal message that OT addresses driving as an IADL.

The COVID-19 pandemic impact on community based education and assumptions for virtual delivery.

Prior to COVID-19, CarFit was an in-person program, personal interaction at cars. The adaptation to add a virtual program to support Aging in Place for older adult drivers during (and following) a pandemic will be discussed.

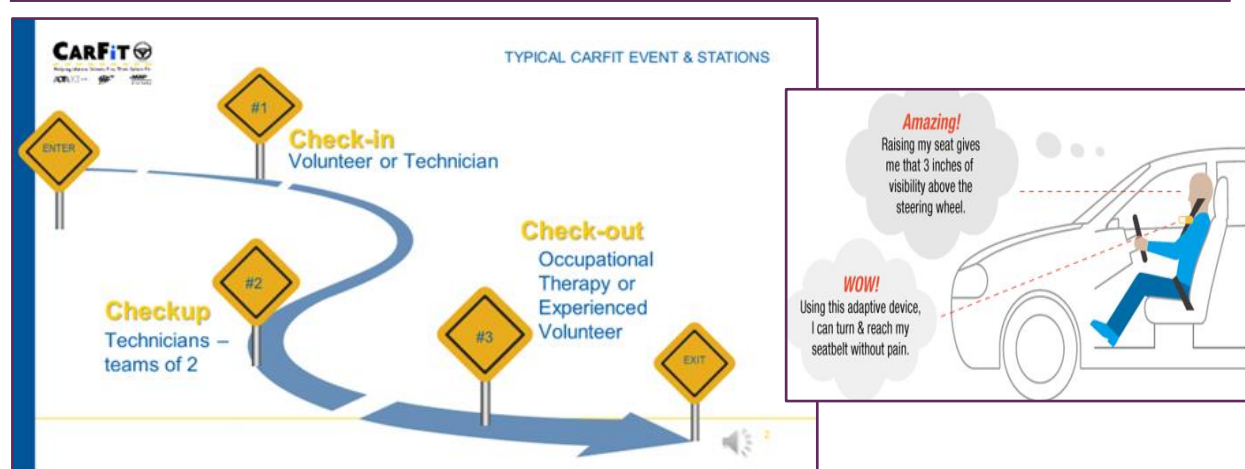
Method/Approach

Occupational therapy practitioners have observed changes in the use of personal vehicles because of COVID-19. The personal vehicle is recognized as a safer place due to the ability to physically distance during community mobility. CAOT participated in an AOTA stakeholder-working group as the **CarFit** program became virtual to continue to address driving comfort and safety throughout COVID-19.

CarFit: In person (Pre-COVID-19)



- The public attends in-person by registering from a promotional flyer/advertisement.
- In-person CarFit events are held outside.
- Three stations are set up for drivers to drive through and stop at each station.
- CarFit events are conducted by trained volunteers, called Technicians, Coordinators and Instructors
- All roles can be performed by an OT practitioner.
- 12-point checklist is employed during the CarFit assessment, e.g., distance to steering wheel, sight line over steering wheel, ability to buckle/unbuckle seat belt.



CarFit: Virtual (COVID-19 responses)



- Register on-line with the privacy of own computer to participate.
- Scripted PowerPoint for presenter that covers 6 key safety features and their adjustment.
- Simplified checklist for drivers to follow along and take to their vehicle for self-assessment and self-guided education.
- OT led Virtual Question and Answer Sessions (USA)
- Added the options of an On-demand Virtual CarFit sessions that can be viewed anytime (USA).

SEAT BELT

A seatbelt that is adjusted correctly reduces chance of ejection, keeps a person in place, and absorbs energy forces during a crash.

- ▶ Wear a seat belt **every time you drive, no matter the distance.** In some states it is the law and failure to use your seat belt could result in a fine.
- ▶ In addition to your vehicle's crumple zone protection, your seat belt is your first line of defense in a crash.
- ▶ The seat belt is designed to be used in combination WITH the air bags for maximum safety benefit.
- ▶ Wearing a seat belt will help prevent displacement or ejection from the vehicle during a crash.
- ▶ Wearing your seatbelt correctly is the easiest, quickest, and most effective way to stay safe.

CORRECT	INCORRECT

Instructions

1. Sit up, centered in your seat, as if you are preparing to drive.
2. Reach & buckle your seatbelt
3. Snug it up, mid shoulder and low across hips.
4. Check if positioned correctly

(CarFit Tip) Tape the diagram of correct seatbelt position to your lock paper ruler and keep handy for a quick check.

Self-check

- Yes, my seatbelt crosses shoulder (mid collar bone)
- Yes, lap belt is positioned low across the hips / strong pelvic bones
- Yes, I am able to buckle and unbuckle my seatbelt comfortably

Safety Check

- Yes, my seatbelt is snug. I can no longer fit a fist between self and lap belt. Snugger is safer!

Tips for a better fit:

- Is your shoulder strap still uncomfortable or near your neck?
- Try raising or lowering the seat belt height using the adjuster built into the doorframe (if you have one). Did the position of seat belt crossing shoulder improve?

Notes:

- I still have a question.

FINAL CHECK

GO Now that you have completed the check, circle key items you want to make sure you adjust each time you drive.

STOP If you were unable to check yes to any of the self-check questions, or for additional information, consider participating in a Virtual CarFit FOCUS SESSION

Adjusting CarFit Process

Addressing our biases

1. We thought...in-person was the only way to deliver CarFit.
2. We thought...the public would not adjust to a virtual platform.
3. We thought ... virtual would be too abstract and we feared safety implications if content misunderstood
4. We thought ...the effort to pivot and design would be onerous.
5. We thought... the American and Canadian audiences would have different needs.
6. We thought...occupational therapy practitioners needed to drive the wheel by being physically onsite for CarFit to be successful.
7. We thought...the educational material could only be taught and disseminated in one method—in-person.



Realizing our potential

1. We realized...creating a virtual format broadened access to the public by expanding our geographical reach in rural and urban populations.
2. We realized...older drivers increasingly became Zoom/virtually savvy.
3. We realized...a virtual format eliminated the fear of "evaluation" offering a safe and comfortable environment to learn and then conduct their self-assessments.
4. We realized...OTs and our community partners are creative and ambitious. They committed time and expertise to develop the virtual format.
5. We realized...more similarities than differences between countries, participants embraced similar concepts, asked clarifying questions and expressed plans to apply the information presented. Minor tweaks and it worked for all.
6. We realized...the shift to Virtual put many older drivers "at the wheel" to collect information of importance to them with OT on their team for collaboration and guidance.
7. We realized...that people learn differently, and we were able to reach new learners, while making OTs better facilitators and supporters. The public and the profession learned!

Virtual CarFit Testimonial

Shifting the CarFit program to a virtual format was a great collaboration between the members of the CarFit workgroup across the US and Canada. The collegiality and spirit of volunteerism was inspiring. Everyone was focused on the goal; how do we keep CarFit 'alive' and support drivers in a new way. The appreciation of the virtual attendees spurred our continued work.

- OT Professor participating in CarFit

Outcomes

The AOTA and CAOT collaboration resulted in an international virtual delivery of CarFit.

The benefit of a proactive response to the COVID-19 pandemic produced favorable results. Due to the positive feedback and response from our clients, OTs are now involved in both in-person and virtual **CarFit** events. We welcome sharing of the model internationally. It garnered positive feedback from CarFit trained practitioners and older drivers as evidenced by a growing attendance surpassing 6000 older adults since its launch the fall of 2020. The virtual program expanded outreach and elicited a new means for interaction between OT, partners, stakeholders and the community dwelling (driving!) public.



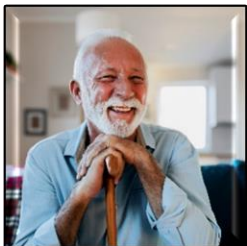
Combining In-person & Virtual

- **Geography didn't matter.** We removed geographical barriers for our attendees. We made it accessible "everywhere" in rural and urban settings. We expanded access, beyond the physical limits of in-person and increased capacity.
- **Flexibility is key.** True to its theme, CarFit was flexible to fit a physical space and flexible to fit a virtual space (respecting technology limitations).
- **People were interested and wanted more.** Learning about prevention when mindful of the occupation of safety was important. Participants reached out and asked about the next event in-person.
- **We were in for a surprise!** It surprised us that 2,000 people registered in the first quarter. We didn't know what to expect. Responses were overwhelmingly positive. Numbers grew each quarter and continue to grow.
- **We kept going!** What we didn't do is cancel the program. We adapted. We collaborated. We revised CarFit.
- **We didn't engage in ageism.** We trusted that older drivers would adapt, and they did. This trust and choice to "Build it and they will come" provided a continuity for the program.



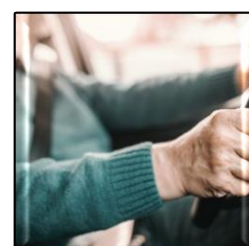
USA & Canada Collaboration

- **We were stronger together.** US –Canada collaboration enabled us to pivot the CarFit model to virtual, and made us effective together. Canada was able to adjust Virtual CarFit to its capabilities, e.g. shorter sessions, reducing reliance of advanced technologies during the virtual presentations.
- **We focused on collaborative design.** We took the time to collaborate and design together, which gave OTs, their community partners, and older adults time to adjust to virtual delivery.
- **We were speaking the same language.** AOTA and CAOT had their own systems for distribution, but the messaging about CarFit is universal!
- **We served more people in our countries.** We were able to respond quickly by having an international perspective for CarFit. We adopted universal design principals and considered the range of needs with a model for greater outreach.



Benefitting Occupational Therapy

- CarFit teaches the OT to consider the vehicle environment, an essential environment and helps OTs move beyond kitchens and bathrooms.
- Through interaction with community dwelling participants, OTs grow in their capacity to observe and serve.
- CarFit opens the door to addressing driving. It enables OTs to ask if driving is important, and then proactively and positively addresses fit and access.



Tackling Barriers and Challenges

- CarFit empowers a conversation with older drivers, challenging OTs to not confuse assessing person-vehicle fit with driver rehab.
- CarFit builds confidence & overcomes fears in driving discussions; IADL goals can be addressed. It includes the role of mobility, distinguishing vehicle environment from driver rehab and fitness to drive.
- CarFit prepares OT students & practitioners to understand the **occupations of driving & community mobility** as health promotion.



Considering Social Determinants of Health

- Limited access to transportation is considered as one of the Social Determinants of Health.
- If OT is comfortable talking about grab bars in bathrooms or adaptive devices in the kitchen, this must extend to the car! And to the occupation of driving.
- Meaningfully addressing valued IADLs is perceived as useful by consumers, and CarFit provides a venue for OTs to be noticed as helpful, which is critical to health promotion and prevention.

Conclusion

A collaborative American-Canadian response to COVID-19 by adapting the historically in-person CarFit program delivered across North America exemplifies how different countries and their occupational therapy associations can work together to enable occupation in populations. The AOTA and CAOT response to COVID-19 for the CarFit program delivered in North America showcases how different countries can successfully collaborate to deliver programs that impact population health and well-being. Visit www.caot.ca/carfit, and www.car-fit.org or **scan QR code** for more information.

