

REAL-LIFE STORIES OF CANADIANS UNABLE TO ACCESS OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY



I have had clients insured by Blue Cross, Desjardins and Manulife that have had their claims for occupational therapy rejected despite needing intervention by an OT to support their health and wellbeing. **Occupational therapy should be valued as an essential service, and this should be reflected by extended health benefits plans through coverage of occupational therapy services.** It is disheartening having to discharge clients needing occupational therapy because their insurer will not cover my services. (*Occupational Therapist, BC*)

Following an ICU stay, my mother-in-law was seeking occupational therapy services to help navigate post hospitalization weakness, support a return to activities of daily living, and to receive advice on universal design for her bathroom to increase accessibility and prevent falls. Unfortunately, she was told that she could not access occupational therapy due to the severe backlog in the system. Her extended health benefit plan would barely cover an assessment and one treatment session. **I'm advocating for increased access to occupational therapy coverage within insurance plans to help people like my mother-in-law access occupational therapy support where and when they need it.** (*Ontario resident*)

Ontario is the only province in which OTs can direct bill to the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program for mental health services. I practice in Saskatchewan, and my clients are facing difficulties accessing mental health services. **I am advocating for the inclusion of OTs as NIHB registered mental health therapists in Saskatchewan so that my clients have timely access to mental health support.** (*Occupational Therapist, SK*)

To obtain a custom and custom-fitted splint, the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program requires client to receive an assessment and a prescription from a certified hand therapist. For many of my clients, this is a barrier because they don't have access to a certified hand therapist in their community and/or they cannot pay for the service. **As an occupational therapist working in arthritis care, I have specialized training in fitting custom splints for people with arthritis. If NIHB reimbursed custom splinting for my clients, they would receive the customized splints they need in a timely manner without incurring additional expenses.** (*Occupational Therapist, ON*)