What is Occupational Therapy?

“Occupational therapy helps you live your best life at home, at work – and everywhere else. It’s about being able to do the things you want and have to do. That could mean helping you overcome challenges learning at school, going to work, playing sport or simply doing the dishes. Everything is focused on your wellbeing and your ability to participate in activities”. (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2024).

How are patients referred to Occupational Therapy?

Referrals are accepted from the Rheumatologist, Rheumatology Nurse Specialist or Rheumatology AHP colleagues. These will be prioritised in order to identify patients who require urgent OT intervention to reduce risk and those who can wait for a routine appointment.

What should I expect from my appointment?

There will be an initial assessment to identify any difficulties that you may be experiencing with activities of daily living within the areas of self-care, productivity and leisure.

In-patient service – all consultations will be carried out face to face within the occupational therapy department and ward setting within the Ross memorial Hospital, Dingwall.

Out-patient service – the initial assessment will be completed by telephone and any subsequent appointments will be either telephone or face to face at the Ross Memorial Hospital, Dingwall.

Self-care

This includes personal care tasks such as toileting and dressing; functional mobility such as walking and bed transfers and community management such as grocery shopping and driving.

Productivity

This includes paid/unpaid work; looking after children and household management such as food preparation and general household activities.

Leisure

This includes hobbies/interests such as reading and sport/exercise as well as socialisation tasks such as using a telephone.

What Treatment can a Rheumatology Occupational Therapist provide?

Hand Assessment

The assessment will involve observation of the movement your hands and wrists to identify any joint pain, swelling or changes of function.
The treatment options to support your hand function may involve:

- **Exercise – you may be prescribed the SARAH hand and wrist program, which is an exercise program designed for inflammatory arthritis.**
- **Splinting – these are devices which can support joints to allow you to engage in daily activities.**

Joint Protection

This is a way of using your hands to reduce or minimise the stress or strain on the small joints of your hands and wrists when engaging in daily activity.

You will be provided with joint protection education which includes strategies to support participation in daily activities, leisure, work and hobbies activities.

Further information can be accessed following these resources:

Arthritis UK booklet - Joint care: Looking after your joints when you have arthritis | Arthritis UK

NRAS tips - Useful tips | NRAS | Day-to-Day Living | Practical Help

Module 1: Looking after your joints - MSKHub

Work & Employment

We will discuss with you any related issues that affect your current ability to engage at work. We can explore strategies that will support your continued engagement at work and signpost to further support.

Further information can be accessed following these resources:

https://abilitynet.org.uk/

https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/dse/assessment.htm

Work and arthritis | Arthritis UK

Emotional Wellbeing

We are aware that your diagnosis and symptoms can impact your emotional well-being.

We can work with you to explore strategies that support you feel well within yourself.

If you are struggling with your emotional health, the following resources may be of benefit:

NHS Inform - Mental wellbeing | NHS inform

NRAS Wren Project - The Wren Project

Stress - Stress and arthritis: Why it's important to manage your stress levels | Arthritis UK

Sleep - Lift Up Your Everyday | RCOT

Sleep & Arthritis - Sleep | Improving your sleep when you have arthritis

Self-Management

This is about giving you the knowledge and skills to manage any change or symptoms in your overall health and well-being

Part of your individual treatment may be exploring the following topics:

Breathwork

Self-care plan

Goal setting

Fatigue Management

Fatigue is a feeling of weariness, extreme tiredness which can affect you both physically and mentally. It is a reduction in energy and your body's ability to function; the following resources can provide advice and practical help to support you to manage your energy levels.

As part of your treatment intervention, this topic may be discussed further with you.

The following resources provide further information

NRAS Fatigue Matters - Fatigue Matters | NRAS

Arthritis UK - Managing fatigue: Causes, self-help, support | Arthritis UK

NASS - AS-Fatigue-01.25-WEB.pdf

Following an initial consultation we will identify what matters most to you and your treatment plan will be tailored around this.

Toria MacDonald

Vivian Scott

Rheumatology Occupational Therapy Team

Ross Memorial Hospital

Dingwall

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