



OT PLEXUS
CHANGING LIVES POSITIVELY

INSPIRING CHANGE IN HEALTHCARE IN RWANDA:

AN INNOVATIVE SOLUTION TO INCREASE ACCESS AND AWARENESS TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

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Inspiring Change, Innovating Futures

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INTRODUCTION & CONTEXT

- Rwanda: 73 registered OTs serving ~14 million people
- Major barriers: limited workforce, rural access, low awareness of OT
- Urgent need for scalable, innovative, and context-appropriate solutions

Key message: Access to OT is not only a workforce issue, but a systems and awareness challenge.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In Rwanda, access to occupational therapy services remains limited due to the concentration of practitioners in urban settings, low public and interprofessional awareness of occupational therapy roles, and limited availability of affordable assistive devices. Most assistive products are imported, costly, or inaccessible, particularly for rural and low-income populations. Currently, there is no integrated platform that simultaneously addresses awareness, service access, and the provision of context-appropriate, affordable assistive technology, resulting in unmet occupational needs across the population.

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INTRODUCING OT PLEXUS

OT Plexus is a student-led, innovation-driven digital startup developed in Rwanda to address gaps in access, awareness, and affordability of occupational therapy services. The initiative adopts a multi-sectoral approach, operating across business-to-consumer (B2C), business-to-business (B2B), and business-to-government (B2G) models to ensure sustainability and scalability. OT Plexus functions as an integrated ecosystem that connects individuals, occupational therapists, and context-appropriate solutions through digital platforms.

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DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The development of OT Plexus was guided by a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach involving three occupational therapy students and two occupational therapy lecturers from the University of Rwanda, twelve licensed occupational therapists, and one software developer. The project was implemented over a two-year period using an iterative design and testing process, with continuous input from practitioners and end users. This co-creation approach ensured that the solutions developed were contextually relevant, user-centred, and responsive to real practice needs.

DIGITAL MILESTONES ACHIEVED

OT Plexus established a Kinyarwanda-focused YouTube channel to support occupational therapy awareness through interviews with professionals, community education, and public engagement content. In addition, social media platforms including Instagram, X, Facebook and TikTok were developed to disseminate information and engage students, communities, and health professionals. These digital awareness initiatives have contributed to improved public understanding of occupational therapy roles and their value in promoting participation and quality of life.

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TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

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OT Plexus developed a dedicated website to enhance the visibility and accessibility of occupational therapy services in Rwanda, including an online marketplace for affordable assistive devices. The platform supports the distribution of Appropriate Paper-Based Technology (APT), which consists of locally developed, low-cost, and context-relevant assistive solutions. This integrated approach combines digital access with appropriate technology to address affordability and accessibility challenges in low-resource settings.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

Increased public awareness of occupational therapy. Improved access to affordable assistive devices supports occupational participation, functional independence, and inclusion for individuals and communities. Additionally, the use of digital platforms offers opportunities to extend occupational therapy services to underserved and rural populations. Collectively, these outcomes support the strengthening of community-based, preventive, and accessible occupational therapy practice.

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CONTRIBUTION TO OT EDUCATION & PROFESSION

The student-led nature of OT Plexus promotes the development of leadership, innovation, and entrepreneurial competencies among occupational therapy students. The platform enhances the professional identity and visibility of occupational therapy within the Rwandan health system. Furthermore, the model demonstrates transferability to other low-resource and Global South contexts, positioning OT Plexus as an integrated model for learning, service delivery, and professional advocacy.



FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Future development of OT Plexus will focus on establishing partnerships with the Ministry of Health and non-governmental organizations to support integration within the national health system. Planned activities include expanding service offerings, and developing a national directory of occupational therapy services. In addition, future phases will emphasize research and outcome evaluation to assess impact, inform continuous improvement, and support evidence-based practice.



THANK YOU

Q&A

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