

# A Survey of Occupational Therapists on Employment Support for Individuals with Advanced or Terminal Cancer in Japan

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## Introduction & Objectives:

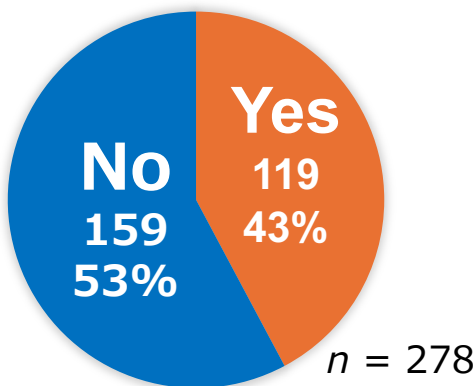
This study explores occupational therapy practices related to employment support for individuals with **advanced or terminal cancer**.

The objectives were to identify clients' desire for employment in palliative care and to clarify the role of occupational therapists in supporting these desires.

## Key Message

In Japan, **employment support** is actively provided to cancer patients **from diagnosis through treatment**. However, practices in the advanced and terminal phases of cancer remain unclear.

*Survey results indicated that approximately 43% of Japanese occupational therapists had experience providing employment support to individuals with advanced or terminal cancer.*



Work remains a meaningful occupation even for individuals who are no longer able to continue paid employment. Occupational therapists provided support while respecting the personal meaning of work for each client.

## Methods:

A web-based survey was distributed **to occupational therapists** working at 461 designated cancer care hospitals in Japan.

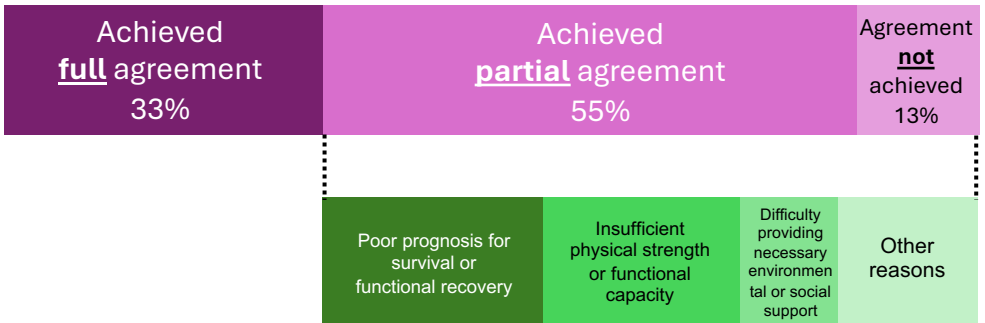
The survey **assessed therapists' experience** with employment support, patients' age groups, diagnoses, employment aspirations, goal achievement, and challenges.

## Results:

Among 278 respondents, **119 (43%)** had experience in providing employment support for advanced or terminal cancer patients.

### Achievement of goal agreement reflecting patients' wishes

(n = 119)



### Reasons why an agreement reflecting the patient's wishes was not achieved

(n = 80)

#### Reasons why patients with advanced or terminal cancer wish to continue working

Category	Responses
<b>Economic necessity</b>	To support one's livelihood To cover child-rearing and education expenses To afford medical expenses
<b>Social roles and responsibilities to others</b>	To maintain a sense of role or usefulness To avoid burdening customers or colleagues To provide guidance and hand over responsibilities to successors
<b>Self-realization and self-fulfillment</b>	To feel that one is truly alive To cherish and make the most of one's remaining time To contribute to society in one's own way

The meaning of work extended beyond economic necessity to encompass substantial psychosocial dimensions, including social roles and responsibilities toward others, as well as self-realization and self-fulfillment.

## Agreement-based goals for return to work (n = 119)

Full-time return to work

Return to work with reduced hours or part-time

Time-limited return to work (several days to several months)

Handover-only or partial return to work

Workplace visits only (including web-based meetings)

Work-related reminiscence with a therapist

Facility-based simulated activities or training only

No goal could be established

Other

Rather than focusing solely on actual return to work, occupational therapists formulated goals aligned with patients' clinical conditions as well as their wishes and underlying intentions, including facility-based practice and work-related reminiscence.

## Difficulties experienced by occupational therapists in supporting patients' employment desires



- *Difficulty in predicting prognosis*
- *Progressive deterioration of disease status and physical capacity*
- *Limited availability of support from the workplace and the surrounding environment*
- *challenges in aligning patients' current conditions with their wishes*

There are many challenges that differ from those encountered in conventional employment support.

## Discussion & Conclusion:

Clients with advanced or terminal cancer seek more than financial benefits from work; they also express a desire for social engagement and self-worth. Occupational therapists play a crucial role in aligning with clients' aspirations, setting realistic goals, and enhancing their quality of life.

From a palliative care perspective, employment support is important for patients to reaffirm their self-value. The findings emphasize the significance of multidisciplinary collaboration in facilitating employment support.

Further research is needed to develop concrete support strategies.