

Perception of Occupational Therapy Intervention in Wheelchair Seating among Healthcare Professionals in Bahrain

Mohamed Altajer, OTD, CLT, Yathreb Aladraj, Sr. OT, Ahmed Almarhoon, Sr. OT
(MTajer1@hospitals.gov.bh)
Government Hospitals, Kingdom of Bahrain

Introduction

Wheelchair seating significantly affects comfort, mobility, posture, and quality of life.

OT's role in seating is often under-recognized, leading to delays and suboptimal outcomes.

WHO wheelchair service delivery guidelines (8 steps) emphasize early, interprofessional involvement.

Objective: Assess healthcare professionals' perceptions of OT in wheelchair seating in Bahrain and identify referral pathway gaps.

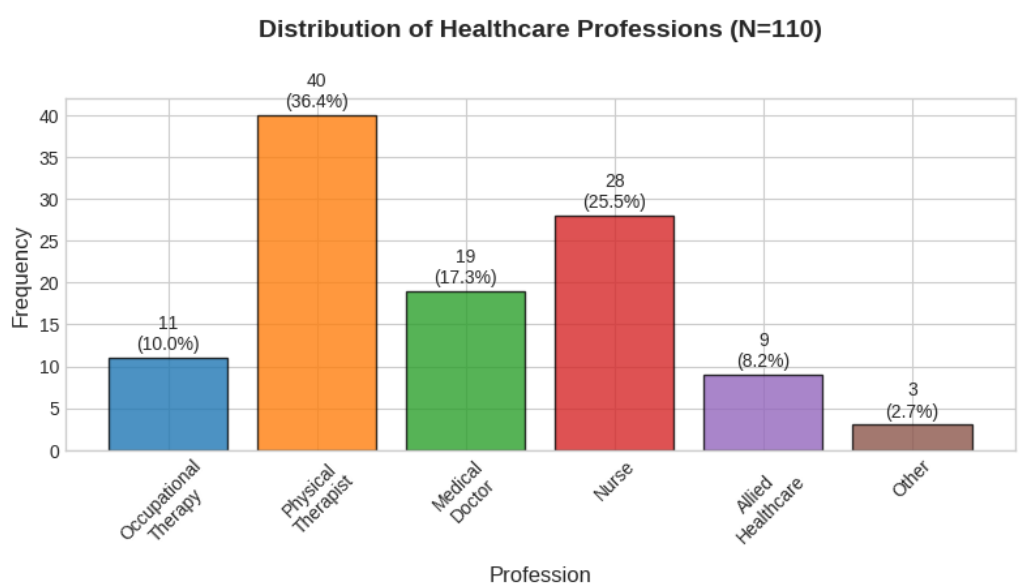


Despite high perceived importance of OT, referral rates to OT for seating remain low; knowledge-practice gaps persist

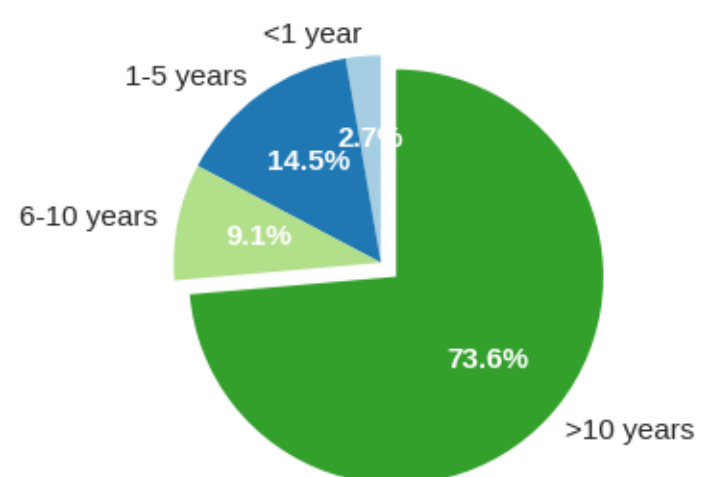
Measures: Questionnaire covering awareness, knowledge, referrals, perceived importance/effectiveness, benefits, challenges, collaboration, and training.

Sample Characteristics

- Profession (Q1): PT 34.5%, Nurse 27.3%, Medical Doctor 18.2%, OT 10.9%, Allied Health 9.1%, Other 2.7%.
- Experience (Q2): >10 years 63.6% (majority experienced).
- Primary setting (Q3): Hospital 67.3%



Years of Experience Distribution



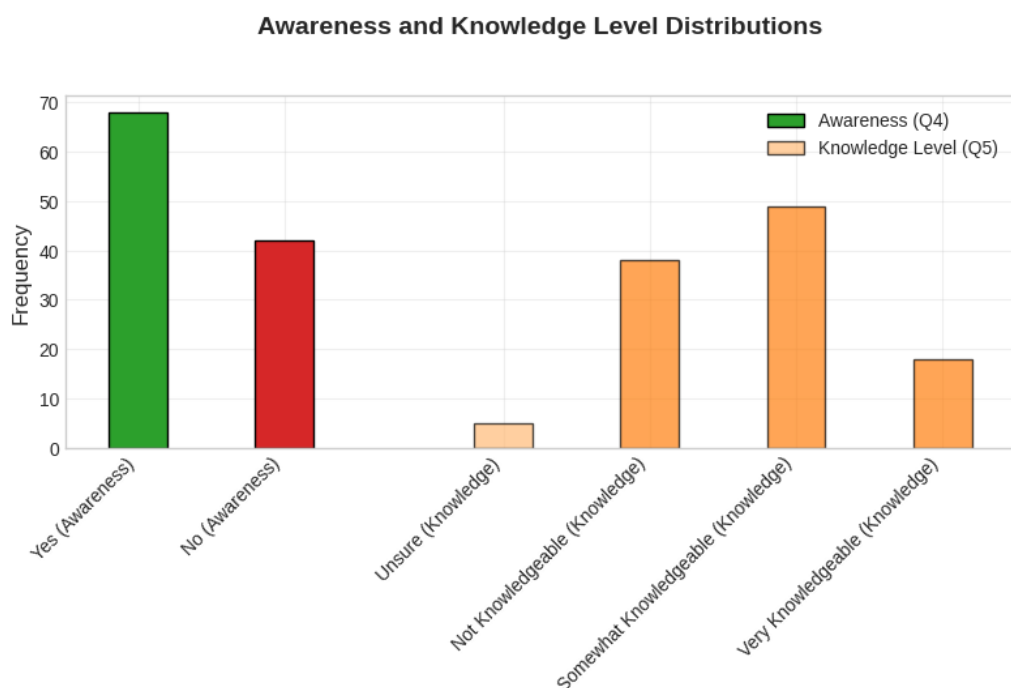
Methods

- **Design:** Descriptive cross-sectional survey.
- **Population:** Healthcare professionals in Bahrain (OTs, PTs, MDs, Nurses, Allied Health, etc.).
- **Sample size:** N = 110 completed responses (pilot/initial dataset).
- **Settings:** Hospitals, rehabilitation centers, private clinics, health centers.

Results

Awareness & Knowledge

- Awareness of OT role in wheelchair seating: 80.9% yes; 19.1% no.
- Self-rated knowledge: Unsure 10%; Not knowledgeable 27.3%; Somewhat knowledgeable 41.8%; Very knowledgeable 20.9%.

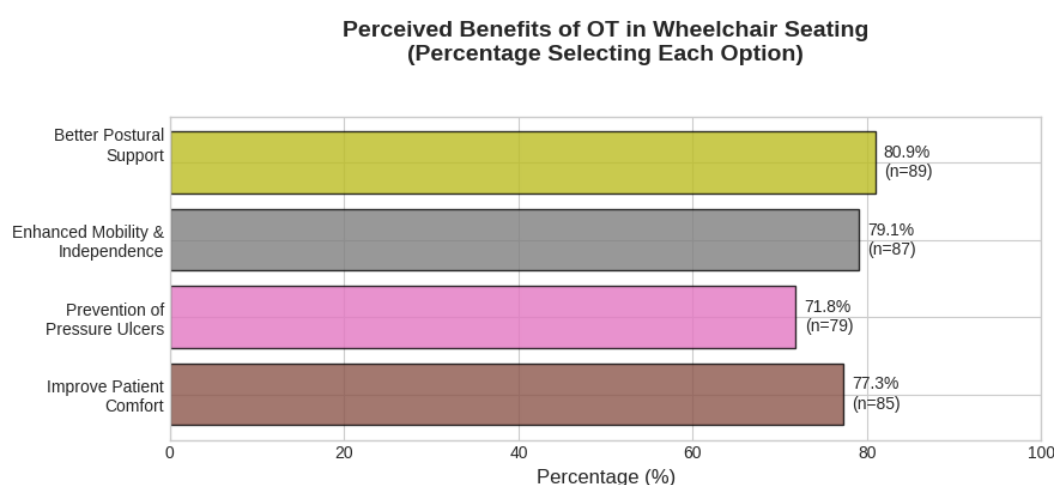


Referral & Perceived Value:

- Referred to OT for seating: 33.6% yes; 59.1% no; 7.3% not applicable.
- Perceived importance of OT: Very important 71.8%; Somewhat 20.0%; Unsure 6.4%; Not important 1.8%.
- Perceived effectiveness of OT: Very important 74.5%; Somewhat 19.1%; Unsure 5.5%; Not important 0.9%.

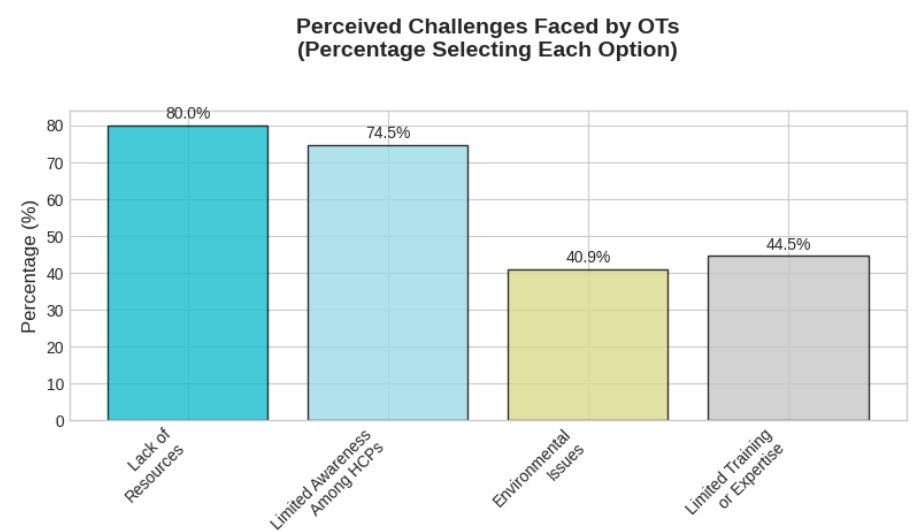
Perceived Benefits (Q9A–Q9D)

- Improve comfort: 73.6% yes.
- Prevent pressure ulcers: 74.5% yes.
- Enhanced mobility/independence: 81.8% yes.
- Better postural support: 81.8% yes



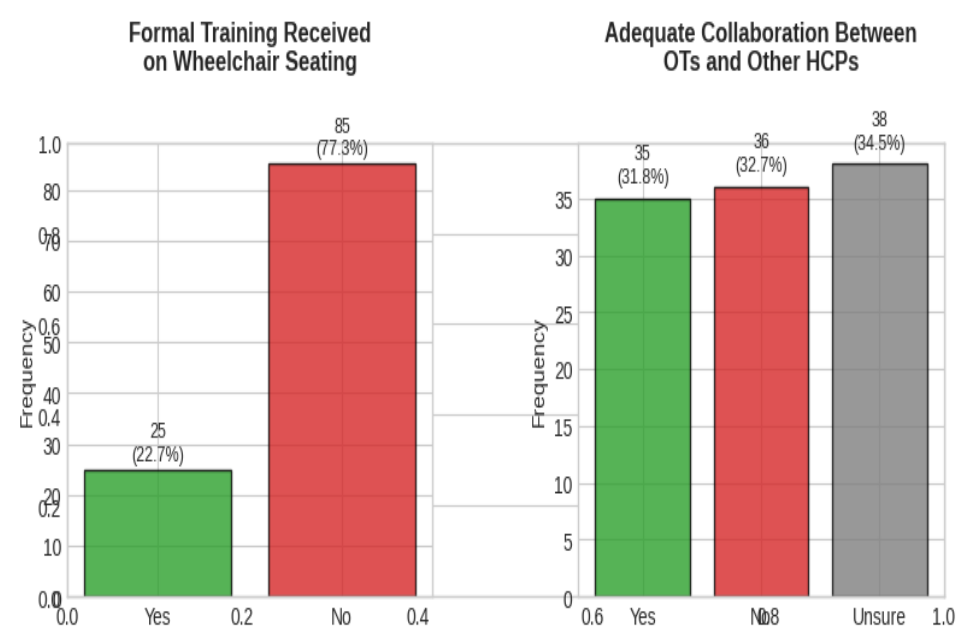
Challenges & Barriers

- Lack of resources: 73.6% yes.
- Limited awareness among HCPs: 78.2% yes.
- Environmental issues: 73.6% yes.
- Limited training/expertise: 68.2% yes.



Collaboration & Training

- Adequate collaboration: Yes 22.7%; No 43.6%; Unsure 33.6%.
- Formal training on wheelchair seating: Yes 25.5%; No 74.5%.
- Training included OT role (among trained): 53.6% yes.
- Benefit of additional training/workshops: 79.1% yes.



Barriers in Bahrain

- Limited OT availability: 76.4% yes.
- Lack of awareness among HCPs: 80.0% yes.
- High cost of equipment: 72.7% yes.
- Cultural/social stigma: 76.4% yes.

Key Inferential Observations

- High regard for OT but low referral rates indicate knowledge–practice gap.
- Awareness does not equal detailed knowledge.
- Collaboration is suboptimal; training and resources are needed.

Discussion

- **Summary:** Respondents view OT as highly important and effective for wheelchair seating, with strong benefits in mobility and postural support, and ulcer prevention. However, actual referrals to OT are low, revealing a knowledge–practice gap.
- **System-level barriers:** Limited OT availability, high equipment costs, and cultural stigma hinder OT involvement.
- **Education & Training:** A major unmet need; 74.5% lack formal wheelchair seating training; 79.1% want more training/workshops.

Conclusion

- The study reveals a strong recognition of OT's value in wheelchair seating among Bahraini healthcare professionals, coupled with a substantial referral gap and systemic barriers. OT's potential to improve comfort, prevent pressure injuries, and enhance mobility and independence is widely acknowledged, yet practical integration into care pathways is inconsistent.
- To optimize patient outcomes, a multi-pronged approach is required: expand and standardize referral pathways; implement interprofessional education to bridge awareness and practical knowledge gaps; invest in OT staffing and affordable seating solutions; and address cultural barriers that influence acceptance of seating interventions.

- In Bahrain, elevating OT's role in wheelchair seating hinges on coordinated efforts across education, clinical practice, and policy. By aligning perceptions with actionable referrals and resource support, healthcare teams can deliver timely, evidence-based seating interventions that improve quality of life for wheelchair users.

Next steps for stakeholders:

- Healthcare institutions: adopt standardized referral protocols and schedule IPE sessions; allocate resources for seating assessments and equipment.
- Educators and professional bodies: develop and Disseminate training modules on WSM (wheelchair seating measurements), OT assessment techniques, and goal-oriented documentation.
- Policymakers and funders: consider subsidizing expensive seating equipment, expanding OT positions in rehabilitation teams, and supporting national guidelines for wheelchair service delivery.

Recommendations

- Implement interprofessional education to align awareness with practical knowledge.
- Establish clear referral pathways and protocols to convert positive perceptions into referrals.
- Allocate resources for OT staffing, equipment, and affordable seating solutions.
- Incorporate cultural competence and patient-centered goals in training.
- Conduct qualitative follow-ups to understand why referrals remain low despite positive views.

Acknowledges to our sponsors:



green
international
medical