

Leveraging Occupational Therapists' Unique Skills and Experience in Social Prescribing

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INTRODUCTION

Consequently, addressing social needs by healthcare professionals has become increasingly emphasized. As one approach to this challenge, **social prescribing (SP)** originated in the United Kingdom and has since spread globally. SP is a healthcare approach that connects patients from healthcare settings to non-medical resources that can address the social issues underlying their health problems.

SOCIAL NEEDS & HEALTH IMPACT

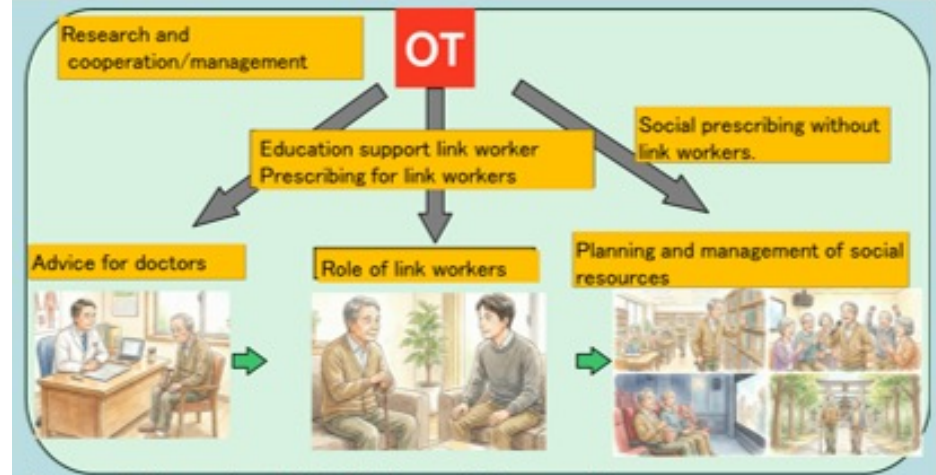


Figure 2. The role of UK OT in social prescribing.

The WHO has indicated that **occupational therapists (OTs)**, nurses, and social workers are appropriate professionals to assume the LW role when LWs are unavailable. In the UK, OTs fulfill various roles within SP.

In Japan, SP initiatives have been implemented in both healthcare and non-healthcare settings.

However, the role of OTs has not been explicitly documented in either context.

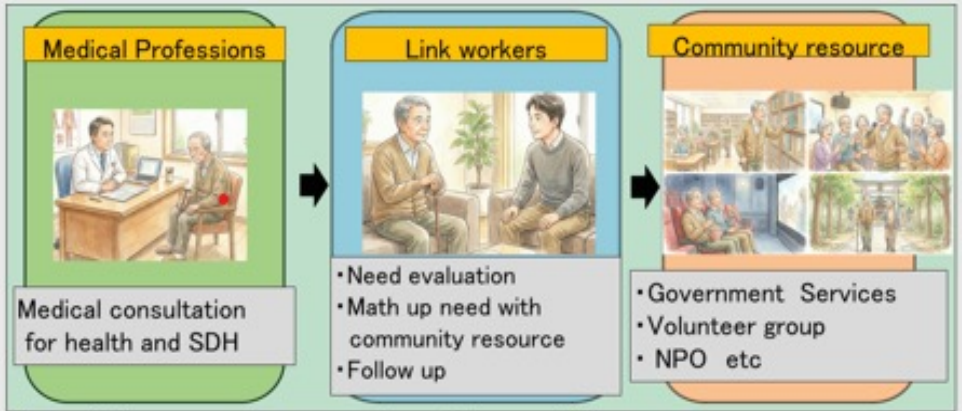
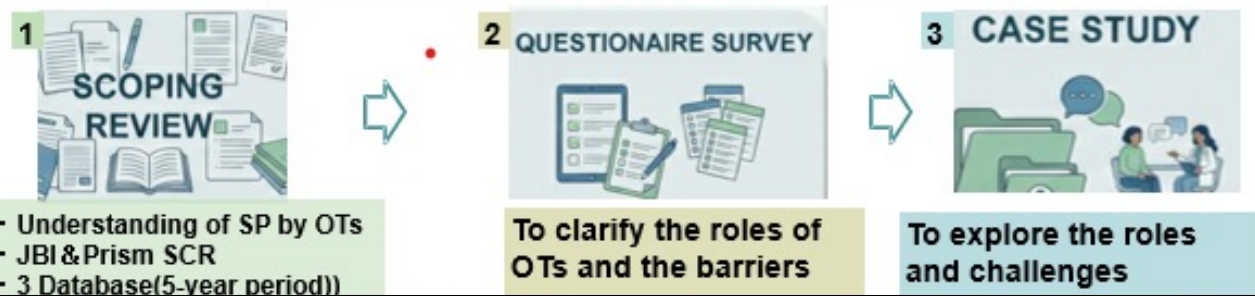


Figure 1 The general process of social prescribing (Peschen; 2018, Kimberlee; 2015)

A typical SP process commonly implemented in the UK. First, healthcare professionals identify patients with social needs. **Link workers (LWs)** then conduct needs assessments, match patients with appropriate community resources, and provide ongoing support to facilitate engagement with public services, volunteer organizations, and non-profit organizations, thereby promoting health.

【OBJECTIVE & METHOD】

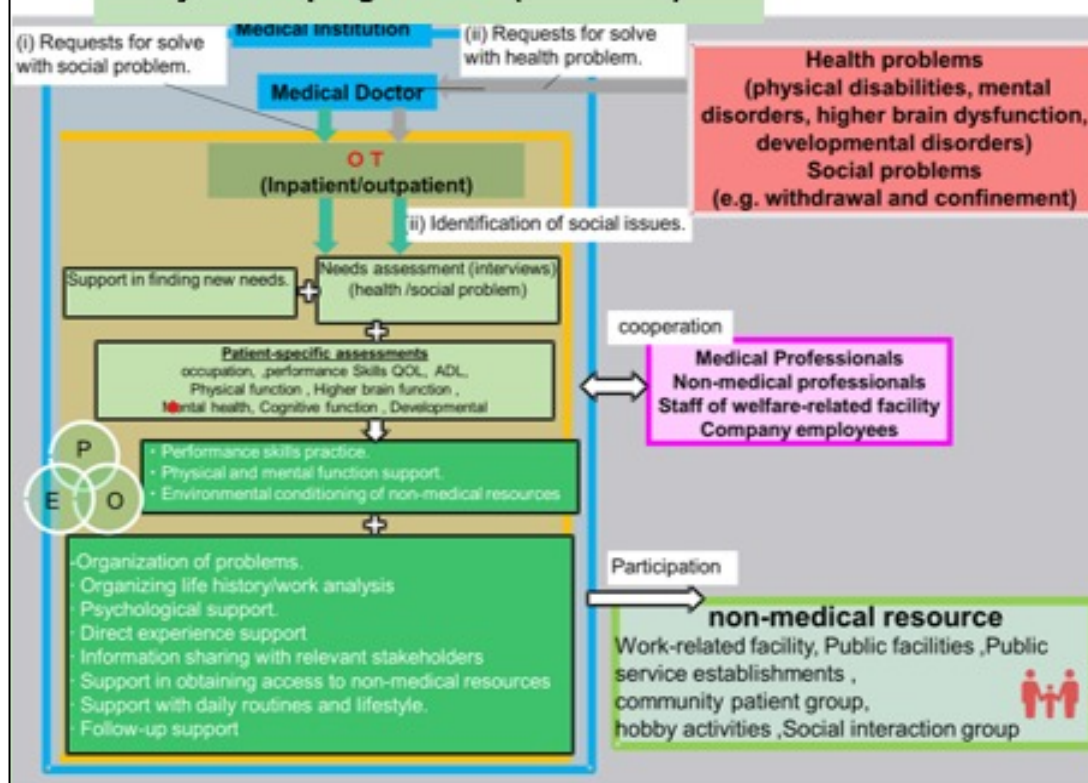
To elucidate the realities and issues of SP in Japanese Ots
Establishing a foundation for the role of OTs in SP in Japan



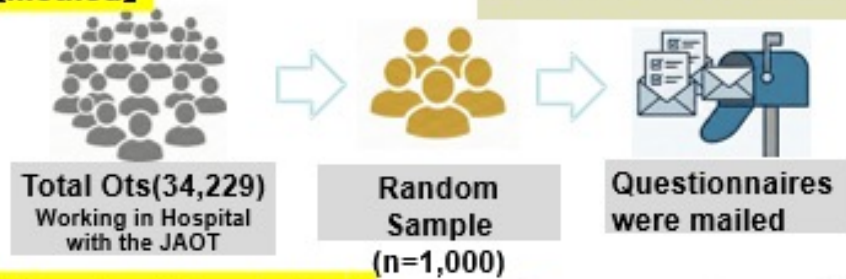
Study1 Method

- Population: Patients with health problems and social needs originating from healthcare settings.
- Concept: Support aimed at participation in and sustained engagement with non-medical resources that can address those needs.
- Context: All practices by OTs affiliated with Japanese healthcare settings.

Study 1: Scoping Review (Overview)



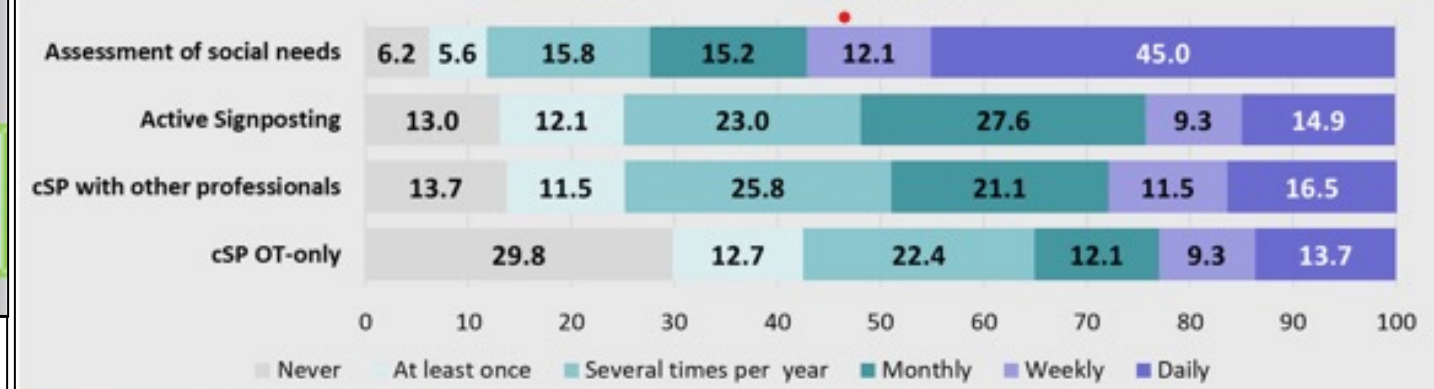
【Method】



- 【Survey Items】**
- Basic Attributes
 - OT Provision for social needs
 - SP type and frequency
 - Content of SP
 - Barriers & Challenges

【Result and Conclusion】

1. Response Rate



【DISCUSSION: Role of OTs】

- The Initiator: OTs in medical settings are positioned to initiate the SP process through assessment.
- Global Comparability: Japanese OTs demonstrate the capacity to fulfill roles comparable to the UK model.

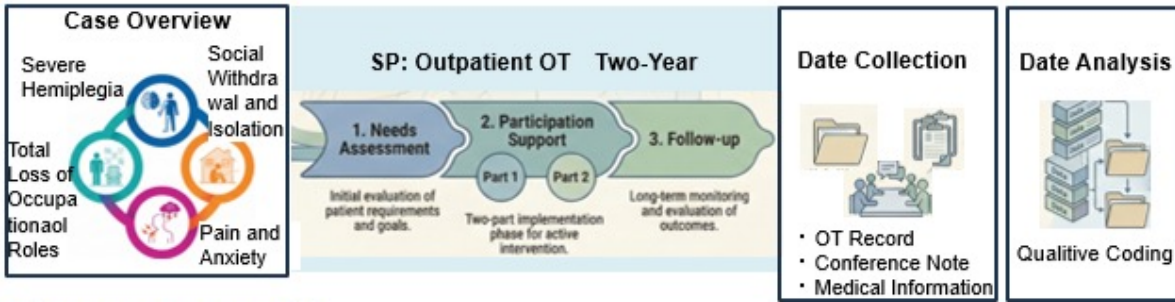
<Roles of Ots>

- Assessment of health and social issues from an occupational perspective
- Facilitating participation and retention
- Multifaceted approach (e.g., environmental adaptation, skills training, routine support)
- Interprofessional collaboration and information sharing
- Follow-up

Japanese OTs are already engaging in SP through their occupation-focused approach, despite not explicitly using the term "Social Prescribing".

Study 3: Case Study (Overview)

【Method】



【Result & Conclusion】

< Seven core roles identified >

Patient Understanding through Occupation and Graded Performance Training

Assessment of Barriers to Social Participation and Patient Understanding



- Inherent to standard occupational therapy practice,
- No existing literature suggests that LW fulfill these specific functions

Direct Collaboration and Information Sharing with Stakeholders

Psychological Support and Fostering Self-Efficacy

Goal Setting and Intervention Planning

Assessment of Fit between Patients and Non-Medical Resources, and Preparatory Support

Role Expansion and Preventive Follow-up

Comparable to the roles performed by LW in the UK

"Graded Performance Practice" based on meaningful occupation as the basis for:

- Skill improvement
- Fostering self-efficacy
- Assessment of barriers & compatibility

【SUMMARY: The Vital Role of Occupational Therapists in Social Prescribing】

OT in SP provide occupation-based patient understanding, direct performance practice, and preventive follow-up .

This occupation-focused approach proves particularly effective for complex cases and participation sustainability—key challenges in SP. Collaboration between OTs and other professions may enhance overall support effectiveness.

【Receiving prescriptions】
【Understanding patient as occupational beings】



Receiving referrals and comprehensively assessing health needs, social needs, and motivation from an occupational perspective

【Emphasis on Performance Practice】

Over 70% have experience with SP

Many OTs already perform roles similar to LW

90% provide performance practice

Supporting skill development and confidence building for participation

Enhancing skill acquisition, self-efficacy, assessing barriers to social participation, and optimizing resource matching

【Bridging healthcare and community】



Providing preventive follow-up to address risks of participation discontinuation and prevent problems

Over 60% provide follow-up