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Literature Review

- Discharge planning in acute care is often medically driven, with limited integration of functional performance and cognition
- ADL performance and functional cognition are strong predictors of readmission and safe discharge outcomes
- Increased Occupational Therapy Involvement is Associated with:
 - Reduced hospital admissions
 - Decreased healthcare costs
 - Improved discharge efficiency
- Discharge planning is interdisciplinary, but collaboration is often inconsistent, and roles are poorly defined

Gaps identified

- Functional and Environmental Factors are not Consistently Prioritized, Contributing to:
 - Delayed discharges
 - Increased readmissions
 - Variability in decision-making

Methods

Design: Exploratory Qualitative
Framework: Person-Environment-Occupation-Performance (PEOP) Model
Setting: UCHealth Acute Care
Participants: 15 Acute Care Occupational Therapy Practitioners (OTPs)
Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews (~30 minutes)

- Audio recorded and transcribed

Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

- Inductive and deductive coding
- AI used as a supplementary tool for transcription and bias reflection (not primary analysis)

Discussion

- OTPs Play a Central Role in Discharge Decision-Making by Integrating:
 - Functional performance
 - Cognition
 - Environmental; context
- Discharge Planning is:
 - Dynamic and multifactorial
 - Strongly influenced by system-level constraints (insurance, resources)
- Key Tensions:**
 - Clinical ideal vs real-world feasibility
 - Collaboration vs unclear role delineation
 - Standardization vs clinical autonomy
- Findings Support the PEOP Model, Highlighting:
 - Interaction between person, environment, and occupation
 - Addition of system-level constraints as a critical influencing layer

Discharge Planning in
Acute Care
An Occupational Therapy
Perspective

Key Takeaways

Exploring the role of Occupational Therapy in acute care discharge planning, highlighting the profession's unique contribution to patient-centered transitions.

Role Delineation and
Workflows

Unclear roles and inconsistent communication can hinder effective discharge planning. Enhancing team-based workflows and role clarity allows the team to provide a safe and appropriate discharge plan.

Emphasis on
Cognition

Cognition is a central factor in discharge decision-making, which the medical model commonly overlooks. Early OTP involvement provides a critical role of cognitive evaluations in determining a patient's ability to function safely beyond the hospital setting.

Clinical Judgement >
Standardized Tools

Emphasizing the importance and self-identity of clinical judgement that is central to the OTP role. Overly prescriptive approaches risk overlooking individualized factors that influence safe and appropriate discharge plans.

Results

- Six Major Themes Emerged:
- OTPs Provide a Distinct, Holistic Lens**
 - Integrate ADLs, cognition, and environment into discharge decisions
 - Cognition, safety, and function were the most dominant factors
 - Discharge Planning is Collaborative, but Roles are Unclear**
 - Frequent interdisciplinary communication
 - Role ambiguity between therapy and case management
 - System Constraints Shape Decision-Making**
 - Insurance, resources, and timelines heavily influence recommendations
 - Family support was identified as the most significant discharge factor
 - Clinical Reasoning Develops with Experience**
 - Confidence and prognostication improve over time
 - Knowledge and exposure drive expertise
 - Moral Distress Occurs with Competing Priorities**
 - Conflict between safety, autonomy, and feasibility
 - Occurs infrequently but is highly impactful
 - Preference for Clinical Judgement Over Algorithms**
 - Resistance to rigid standardization
 - Desire for tools that support, but do not replace, clinical reasoning

Next Steps

- Develop structured, flexible decision-support tools (not rigid algorithms)
- Improve interdisciplinary role clarity in discharge planning
- Increase early OT involvement in acute care workflows
- Support Clinical Reasoning Development Through:
 - Mentorship
 - Training
 - Guided frameworks
- Practice and Policy implications:
 - Embed functional measures into discharge workflows
 - Standardize expectations for OT involvement
 - Enhance communication across disciplines
- Overall Goal:**
 - Improve discharge outcomes
 - Reduce readmissions
 - Support safe, patient-centered transitions of care

Other Resources

Paper



Presentation

