POSITION STATEMENT

Occupational Therapy and Artificial Intelligence

Statement of the position being taken

Artificial intelligence (AI) is reshaping how people worldwide experience and participate in everyday occupations. AI refers to technologies that use data to support prediction, recommendation, content generation and decision-making (OECD, 2024). AI is transforming occupational therapy by supporting service delivery, clinical reasoning, efficiency and access to care through applications in evaluation, intervention, remote monitoring, assistive technologies, administration, education, and research.

WFOT supports the ethical, safe and equitable integration of AI to enhance occupational participation, health and wellbeing, upholding occupational justice as a core commitment. AI must augment, not replace, the occupational therapy workforce or therapeutic relationships. Occupational therapists must remain at the centre of the occupational therapy process, ensuring AI supports rather than replaces clinical reasoning and professional judgement.

WFOT advocates for occupational therapists to contribute to the design, implementation, evaluation and governance of AI systems affecting occupational participation and health. AI integration must include human oversight, comply with applicable legislation, professional standards, data-protection requirements, uphold transparency, informed consent, equitable access, cultural responsiveness and data equity.

Statement of significance of position to occupational therapy

AI is transforming health and social systems and significantly affects occupational therapy practice, education, research and workforce development. AI may support occupational therapy through improved documentation efficiency, service planning, outcome monitoring, translation services, telehealth delivery, research synthesis and access to evidence-informed interventions. AI-enabled technologies may also facilitate participation, self-management, communication and independence for individuals, groups and communities.

AI has the potential to improve access to occupational therapy in rural, remote and underserved communities and help address workforce shortages and rising service demands. However, without ethical governance and human-centered implementation, AI may widen inequities, reinforce bias, reduce culturally relevant care and weaken occupation-centered practice. Occupational therapists need competencies that support the ethical and responsible use of AI in practice. Continuing evaluation of AI's safety, accuracy and effectiveness across diverse populations, including functional outcomes, quality of life and occupational participation, should guide practice and research. Occupational therapy leadership is essential to ensure AI supports occupational engagement, professional standards and inclusion across diverse global contexts.

Statement of significance of position to the community and society

AI-enabled technologies may improve access to services and reshape, enable or at times constrain everyday occupations across diverse communities. AI therefore has potential to enhance inclusion, health, wellbeing and participation for people experiencing barriers related to geography, disabilities, language, socioeconomic conditions, digital infrastructure or workforce shortages.

At a societal level, responsible AI integration may strengthen health systems and support more efficient, responsive care. However, significant risks remain, including algorithmic bias in language, culture, geography, affordability, digital access representation in training data and AI's environmental footprint, including energy, water and resource consumption.

Occupational therapists have an important role in advocating for ethical, transparent and inclusive AI systems that support human rights, occupational participation, community wellbeing, cultural responsiveness and accessible, informed consent. Collaboration with communities, policymakers, educators, researchers and technology developers is essential to ensure AI benefits diverse populations globally.

Summary and conclusion

WFOT supports ethical, equitable, sustainable and human-centered integration of AI that enhances occupational participation, health and wellbeing. AI should support, not replace, professional judgment, the occupational therapy workforce or therapeutic relationships. Occupational therapists play an essential role in ensuring AI is implemented safely, accountably and in ways that uphold occupation-centered, culturally responsive and sustainable practice.

References

Cason, J., Gafni-Lachter, L., Richmond, T., Jacobs, K., & World Federation of Occupational Therapists. (2026). Worldwide survey on artificial intelligence in occupational therapy. WORK: A Journal of Prevention, Assessment & Rehabilitation. https://doi.org/10.1177/10519815261469529

World Health Organization. Ethics and governance of artificial intelligence for health: WHO guidance. Geneva: WHO; 2021. https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240029200

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Explanatory memorandum on the updated OECD definition of an AI system. Paris: OECD; 2024. https://doi.org/10.1787/623da898-en

WFOT. Guiding principles for ethical occupational therapy. WFOT; 2024. https://wfot.org/news/2024/wfot-guiding-principles-for-ethical-occupational-therapy

WFOT. About occupational therapy. WFOT; 2025. https://wfot.org/about/about-occupational-therapy

Disclosure Statement

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) models including Claude (Anthropic), ChatGPT (OpenAI), TerrierGPT (Boston University), and Grammarly (Grammarly Inc.) were used to edit this document. The authors verified and revised all AI-generated content to ensure accuracy and appropriateness.