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Systematic Review: Occupational Therapy and Chronic Conditions in Primary Care

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Introduction

*Health care costs are high and are an ever-increasing concern on a societal and personal level in the United States*¹

- ❑ 75% of all health care costs are spent by those with chronic conditions²
- ❑ People with chronic conditions make up 84% of ‘high users’ of the emergency departments across the United States³
- ❑ 35% percent of emergency department visits are considered avoidable and amount to 18 billion dollars⁴

The effect of high use of healthcare services by persons with chronic conditions is evident and is a concern

- ❑ Occupational therapists provide evidence-based interventions to treat chronic conditions to improve independence and self-satisfaction

*Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) was enacted in 2010 with a goal of changing health care into a more affordable and available field of services*⁵

- ❑ Creating bundled packages for costs, rather than traditional ‘fee-for-services’
- ❑ Using a preventative and evidenced based approach

Objectives

- **Define** occupational therapy’s role in the primary care setting with a focus on those with chronic conditions using Occupational Therapy Practice Framework terminology.
- **Describe** the current evidence on occupational performance related to occupational therapy services in primary care.
- **Discuss** the future implications for occupational therapists working in primary care.

Methods

- **Databases searched:** CINHAL, Ovid Medline, and OT Search.
- All databases were searched between January and February 2014, with the last search completed on February 25, 2014.
- The **search terms** included: occupational therap*, primary care, quality of life, primary care setting*. Truncation symbols (e.g., * and \$) and broad terms were selected in order to include as many articles as possible due to the novelty of this topic.
- 43 articles were screened in full text, resulting in 13 articles to be critiqued.

Results Cont’d

Government Influences

- Plays a large role in whether or not occupational therapists are in primary care
- **Canada:** occupational therapists have a set role in a primary care setting provided by a government-implemented program^{6,7}
- **Britain and Australia:** new changes in government have lead to a recent role for occupational therapists in a primary care setting^{8,9,10}
- **New Zealand and United States:** recent changes to government health policies have lead to occupational therapists to petition for a set role in primary care^{11,12,13}

Level I Article

- Randomized control trial design and an economic evaluation in Britain
- Show the effectiveness of an integrated care group with an occupational therapist for those with chronic low back pain¹⁴
- **Supports and justifies** occupational therapy in primary care
- **Integrated care with an occupational therapist improved quality of life and function for patients**
- **Cost effective** in comparison to standard care

Strengths and Limitations

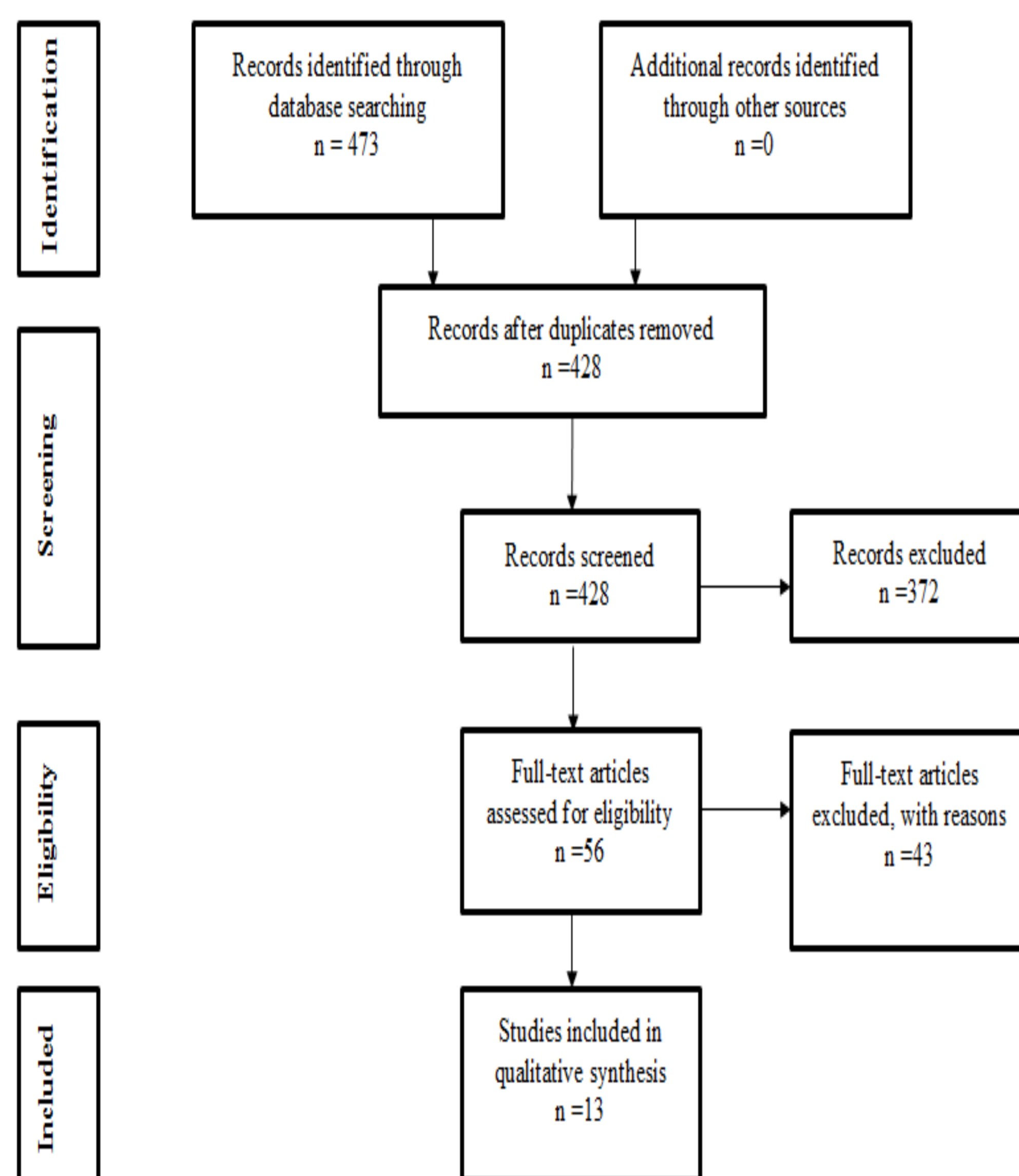
Strengths

- Only peer-reviewed articles were utilized
- Studies published 2000 and prior were excluded
- Authors created an unbiased form to critique level V articles
- Librarians at Thomas Jefferson University

Limitations

- Many of the articles were from international resources
 - Created challenges interpreting various definitions of “occupational therapy” and “primary care”
- Many of articles would refer to a government policy but not expand in detail on the inner details of that said policy

PRISMA Flow Diagram



Results

| Level of Evidence | Number of Articles |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| I | 1 |
| II | 0 |
| III | 0 |
| IV | 0 |
| V | 12 |

Improving Outcomes

- All level V articles discuss how occupational therapy in primary care can **improve outcomes**
- Decrease the need for further services
- Shifting from a traditional medical model to a preventive approach
- **Prevent functional decline** for a longer period of time

Decreasing Healthcare Costs

- Three of the level V articles allude that occupational therapy in primary care can **decrease healthcare costs**
- “Bundled service” versus a “fee-for-service”
- **Reduce the personal cost** of treatment for individuals who are in need of service
- **Increase accessibility** to necessary services for all patients
- **Lower costs** by assessing patients in a time efficient manner

Conclusions and Implications for the Future

- **Further research** to justify and explain an occupational therapist’s role in a primary care setting
- **Increase evidence based research**
- Four countries have occupational therapists staffed in a primary care office currently
- Gap in the evidence to securely **define the role of an occupational therapist**

1. Cohen, Cohen, & Banthin, 2009
2. Thorpe, 2004
3. Peppe et al, 2007
4. Choudhry, Douglass, Lewis, Howard Olson, Osterman, & Shah, 2007
5. Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, 2009
6. Bauer & O’Neill, 2013
7. Donnelly, Brenchley, Crawford, and Letts, 2013

8. Godfrey, 2000
9. Hughes, 2009
10. Mackenzie, Clemson, & Roberts, 2013
11. Muir, 2012
12. Tse, Penman, & Simms, 2003
13. Tse, Wilson, Wright-St. Clair, & Ford, 2003
14. Lambek et al., 2010