



Introducing Pelvic Floor Therapy in Entry-Level Occupational Therapy Curricula

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Pelvic floor therapy is a specialized field of rehabilitation focusing on an individual's pelvic floor musculature to alleviate adverse symptoms affecting urination, bowel movements, sexual function, and stability (Johns Hopkins, 2025). Pelvic floor therapy has become increasingly prevalent, with more individuals of all ages wanting to improve their quality of life by addressing problems with their pelvic floor (Curillo-Aguirre & Gea-lzquierdo, 2023).

The specialized field of pelvic floor therapy directly correlates to the work occupational therapists complete, as the functions of the pelvic floor are strongly related to occupation. Toileting and sexual activity are activities of daily living (ADLs) that occupational therapists are equipped to help improve (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020). The functions of the pelvic floor can also be indirectly related to other occupations. An example is nocturnal enuresis, which affects the quality of rest and sleep (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2020). Additionally, there is a large correlation between individuals who have problems with their pelvic floor and social isolation (Yalazı & Demirci, 2025). This social isolation prevents individuals from participating in leisure activities or interacting within their social groups due to shame or fear from their pelvic floor dysfunction (Yalazı & Demirci, 2025). While there is a clear relationship between pelvic floor health and occupational participation, there is a lack of occupational therapists who specialize in the field of pelvic floor therapy.

Despite the relationship to occupation, the accreditation standards for occupational therapy (OT) curricula do not require teaching content regarding the pelvic floor. Each entry-level OT curriculum follows the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) guidelines for associated program accreditation requirements (ACOTE, 2025). This ensures each institution is held accountable for providing quality education and preparing future occupational therapists for success (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2021). There are currently no standards associated



with integrating pelvic floor therapy into entry-level OT curriculum. The current ACOTE standards for a degree in occupational therapy do not specifically require content regarding pelvic floor therapy, but instead only discuss including a broad exposure to emerging practice areas (ACOTE, 2023). Content relating to pelvic floor therapy not only helps solidify comprehensive skills that can be applied to a variety of clients across the lifespan, but also focuses on addressing the client holistically, aiming to promote their overall well-being (Akselrud & Vestal, 2021).

Pelvic floor therapy is an emerging practice area within the occupational therapy field (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2025b). By providing opportunities to further learn about unique fields that fall under occupational therapists' scope of practice, students will have a more thorough understanding of how occupational therapy applies to a variety of specialized areas of practice. Adding curricular content relating to pelvic floor dysfunction aids in following AOTA's vision statement for 2030. By including pelvic floor health content, occupational therapists can educate, advocate, and provide accessible services for individuals of all ages, resulting in meaningful engagement in daily activities (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2025a).

To address this gap in OT curricula, four modules were created as a pilot for a local university's Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) program in the southwest region of the United States, covering pelvic floor dysfunction across the lifespan. These modules provided a thorough introduction to pelvic floor therapy and occupational therapy's role within this specific field. The materials promote both online learning through the content within the modules as well as collaboration with peers within the classroom to further develop understanding of the topics discussed (Krause & Kelly, 2011). Appropriate student learning objectives for each module were developed using Bloom's Taxonomy. A summary of each module follows, to allow replication of the information into other occupational therapy programs.

Module 1: Introduction to Pelvic Floor Therapy

Module one has two components. The first component is an introduction to pelvic floor therapy. This introduction provides the learner with an overview of pelvic floor health and therapy as well as the role of an occupational therapist within this setting. The goal for this section is for the learner to be able to describe pelvic floor health and associated therapy services. See Table 1 for module-specific objectives. Objectives are met through the PowerPoint, pre-class readings, class discussions, case study assignments, and test questions.

The second section of the first module focuses on the pelvic floor anatomy, providing the learner with a thorough understanding of the musculature and bony structures of the pelvic floor. This promotes a deeper understanding of pelvic dysfunction discussed within the later modules. The overall goal for this section is that the learner will be able to identify the anatomy of the pelvic floor. See Table 1 for module-specific objectives. Objectives are met through face-to-face labs focused on identifying pelvic muscular and

bony landmarks, and by recreating the musculature of the pelvic floor and diaphragm, on a smaller scale, through clay and other medium. This is paired with the completion of a video tutorial on diaphragmatic breathing.

Module 2: General Pelvic Floor Dysfunction

The second module focuses on general diagnoses and treatments of pelvic floor dysfunction. This information is valuable to the learner as it provides a general overview of pelvic floor diagnoses, causes, symptoms, and treatments. The second module's overall goal is for the learner to identify general diagnoses and treatments of pelvic floor dysfunction. See Table 1 for module-specific objectives. Module objectives are met through information provided within the PowerPoint slides, supplemental videos, a bladder diary activity, in-class discussions, exploring alternative devices for proper positioning while toileting, and test questions.

Module 3: Pediatrics and the Pelvic Floor

The third module focuses on pediatric pelvic floor diagnoses and treatments. Pelvic floor therapy from a pediatric perspective is unique in the large amount of caregiver training and specialized interventions that occur. Concepts from module two are applied and further discussed throughout this module. The overall goal for this section is for the learner to gain more breadth of knowledge of pediatric diagnoses and treatments relating to the pelvic floor. See Table 1 for module-specific objectives. Objectives are met through the use of the following: PowerPoint slides; related readings focused on pelvic floor therapy for a pediatric population; in-class discussions; creation of an evidence-based toolkit of interventions and educational tools for caregivers of pediatric clients; examining research questionnaires for pediatric evaluations; reviewing the Child Sensory Profile 2; creation of a script, role playing, and developing a treatment plan for a pediatric client based on a provided case study; and test questions.

Module 4: Geriatrics and the Pelvic Floor

The fourth module focuses on gerontology-based diagnoses and treatments relating to the pelvic floor. This module examines pelvic floor therapy for the older adult, considering their unique factors during evaluation and treatment planning. The overall goal for this module is that the learner will recognize gerontology-based diagnoses and treatments, compare and contrast to those from prior modules, determine appropriate assessments relating to the pelvic floor, and develop an appropriate treatment plan. See Table 1 for module-specific objectives. Objectives are met through the information within the PowerPoint slides, readings, in-class discussions, a simulation discussing sexual activity with a geriatric client, creation of a treatment plan for a geriatric client based on a provided case study, and test questions.

Table 1

Objectives for Pelvic Floor Therapy Modules

Module	Objectives
Module 1: An Introduction to Pelvic Floor Therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define pelvic health and OT's role within the specialty.• Define the role of OT within trauma-informed care.• Identify symptoms of pelvic floor dysfunction.• Discuss the components of pelvic floor evaluations and treatments.
Module 1: Pelvic Floor Anatomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify by observation only, landmarks, pelvic floor musculature, and perineal structures.• Construct a 3D model of the pelvic floor musculature.• Identify the relationship between the lungs, diaphragm, and pelvic floor.
Module 2: General Pelvic Floor Dysfunction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define the different types of urinary incontinence.• Compare different stages of prolapse.• Contrast the different types of catheterizations.• Identify proper toileting ergonomics for fecal defecation.• Classify various pelvic floor therapy interventions based on pelvic floor diagnosis.• Define endometriosis and adenomyosis.
Module 3: Pediatrics and the Pelvic Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define unique pediatric pelvic floor diagnoses.• Categorize pediatric pelvic floor treatments based on what specific areas of deficit they are addressing.• Identify the components of a pediatric pelvic floor therapy evaluation.• Create a speech to explain pelvic floor therapy to a pediatric client.• Develop a 3-week non-invasive treatment plan for a pediatric pelvic floor therapy client.
Module 4: Geriatrics and the Pelvic Floor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define unique pelvic floor diagnoses for individuals over the age of 65.• Identify how specific comorbidities and medications have a direct impact on the pelvic floor.• Compare the differences in pelvic floor treatments and outcomes for individuals over the age of 65, versus those under the age of 65.• Identify appropriate interventions for safety concerns regarding individuals over the age of 65 with comorbidities participating in sexual activities.• Develop a 4-week treatment plan for a pelvic floor therapy client over the age of 65.

Conclusion

Occupational therapists offer a distinct and valuable perspective within pelvic floor therapy by linking an individual's pelvic floor dysfunction to its impact on quality of life, specifically through identifying and addressing negative changes in participation within meaningful daily occupations. Providing OT programs with an evidence-based understanding of the emerging specialty of pelvic floor therapy for integration within their current curriculum can lead to the development of better prepared entry-level occupational therapists entering the workforce. Preparing occupational therapy students who have a strong background in the emerging specialty of pelvic floor therapy increases their understanding of how pelvic floor dysfunction can affect the occupations of their future clients. This results in the student providing quality, client-centered treatments for the improvement of pelvic floor dysfunction, promoting increased participation in daily occupations and an overall improved quality of life.

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