

# OTs Role in Reforming Community-Based Care for Elderly People

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## Introduction:

Health care systems in Europe and beyond face major challenges: an ageing population, an increasing prevalence of chronic illness and multi-morbidity, and an increasing shortage of health professionals, including Occupational Therapists.

The challenge is particularly great in outpatient care for the elderly where Occupational Therapists (OTs) play an important role in providing community-based rehabilitation and enabling clients to stay independent as long as possible.

Innovative models of interprofessional collaboration in community-based care of elderly people may offer new approaches towards these challenges (BAG, 2017).

## Objectives:

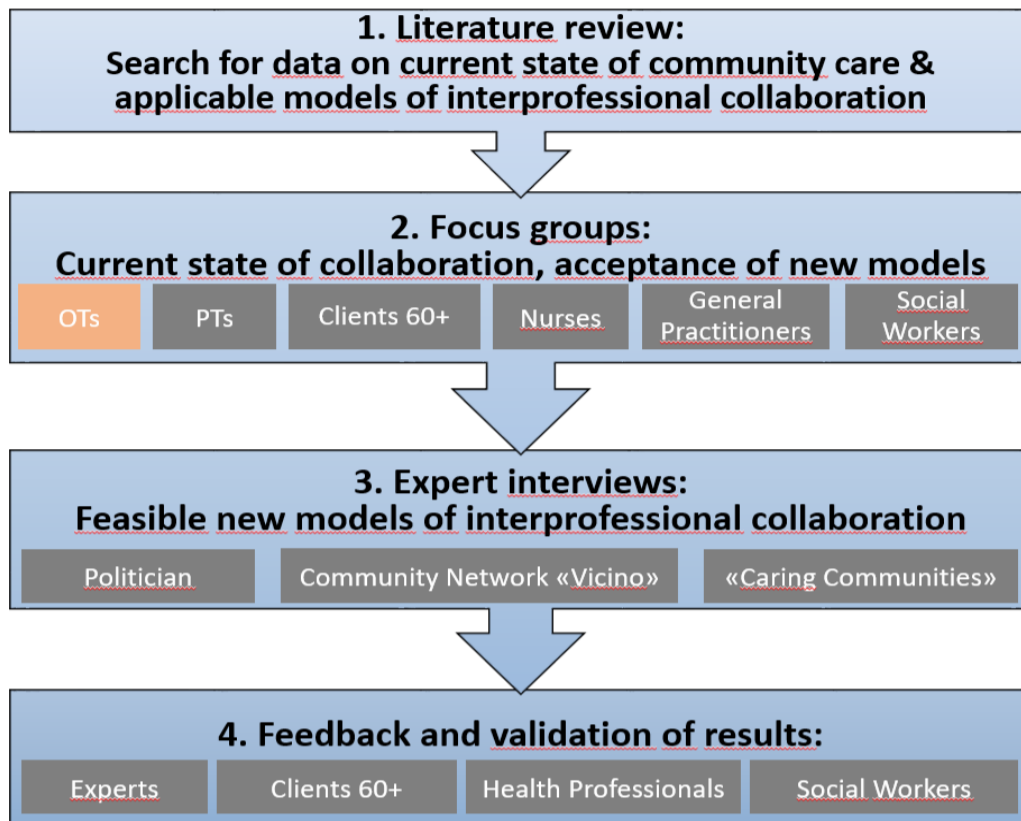
Project aims were:

- 1) To explore the current state of interprofessional collaboration in community-based care, facilitating aspects and obstacles.

- 2) To explore the perspectives of OTs as well as other stakeholders on current challenges and possible solutions in the community-based care of elderly people.
- 3) To explore the feasibility and acceptability of innovative models of interprofessional collaboration in community care.

## Method:

We conducted a literature review on innovative models of interprofessional cooperation. We then sought out a model region unifying urban and rural characteristics in Switzerland. We held four focus groups (n=21) with OTs, physiotherapists, senior citizens, community nurses, and members of aid and support services. Additionally, we interviewed GPs, a politician, and experts from community care projects. Interviews and Focus Groups were recorded and transcribed. The data was analyzed using qualitative methods. Last, we had participants and members of the community validate our findings.



## Results:

### Current situation:

- ❖ shortage of outreach OT services
- ❖ lack of health care coordination in community care
- ❖ lack of common treatment goals amongst health professionals
- ❖ lack of interfaces between health and social care
- ❖ lack of remuneration for coordination services
- ❖ lack of knowledge of existing services among clients and health professionals
- ❖ awareness of the problem and challenges

### Acceptance of new solutions:

- ❖ OTs were open towards new and innovative models of care provision in community care.
- ❖ OTs endorse closer interprofessional collaboration and collaboration with professionals from the social care system.

### OTs role in reformation/innovation:

- ❖ OTs are ready to take-on advanced roles and function as case managers to coordinate health and social care.
- ❖ OTs felt they should have an active part in the change process which has to be “bottom-up”.
- ❖ OTs professional independence must be maintained.

## Conclusions:

OTs are ready to play an active role in reforms towards closer interprofessional cooperation in community care and to take on new roles. New models of cooperation need to build on local needs and existing structures to be successful. Additional funding, professional support and resources are needed for doing so.

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