



## **TITLE- Occupational Therapy in the World of Neonatology: An Emerging Therapeutic**

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### **ABSTRACT (upto 300 words)**

As a part of its professional remit, Occupational Therapy (OT) uniquely pivots on the developing occupations of infancy, including infants receiving care in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU). Based on Synactive Theory of development, Dynamic Systems & Person-Environment-Occupation model, the realm of OT practice in NICU is in tandem with Developmentally Supportive Care (DSC) and Family centered care. With Skillful standardized assessments and clinical observations, Occupational Therapists (OTist) play a crucial role in early identification and screening of neonates with underlying neurodevelopmental affectations.

Centered on International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), OT promotes activity participation in neonate's primary occupation i.e. feeding. Premature Infant Oral-Motor Intervention (PIOMI) alongside other OT feeding interventions, pave way for transitioning neonates from Nasogastric tube to breastfeeding in the NICU. Thus, enhancing parental-child interaction and facilitating engagement in parental occupations. Prescription of appropriate adaptive feeding devices and fabrication of customised splints for neonates with congenital anomalies, is specific to Occupational Therapy.

2nd International Conference on  
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DSC and Neuro-protective approach lay the foundation for use of non-pharmacological pain management strategies, directed towards reducing adverse neurodevelopmental effects due to repetitive exposure to painful stimuli in the NICU and subsequently improving the neurobehavioral status of the neonate. NIDCAP (Newborn Individualised Developmental Care & Assessment Program) based OT interventions comprise of promoting self-regulation, inhibiting abnormal reflexes, tone normalization techniques, providing kangaroo mother care, etc.

With several published research stating the effectiveness of inexpensive therapeutic positioning devices and innovative splintage in neonates designed by occupational therapist, OT as a profession has significantly contributed to the increasing arsenal of evidence synthesis in Neonatology. Occupational Therapy is commensurately an evolving, advanced therapeutic practice for early intervention in the NICU as an adjunct to various other medical interventions, globally.

### **BIOGRAPHY (upto 200 words)**

Dr. Deepa Awasthi is a Gold Medallist in Masters of Occupational Therapy in Developmental Disabilities from L.T.M.M.C & GH, Mumbai, India (Aug'22) and a former OT Graduate from Seth G.S.M.C & K.E.M, Mumbai, India. In September, 2022, she has been honoured with the Moderator position at the 4<sup>th</sup> Edition of Global Conference on Pediatrics & Neonatology (EPN), along with Oral Paper Presentation at the same. She has been a CME Speaker at the 14<sup>th</sup> World Down Syndrome Conference (Dubai) in Nov'21.

Dr. Deepa has won Best Scientific Paper Presentation Award at the Annual Conference of Association of Neonatal therapist for two consecutive years of 2021-20. She was conferred with the prestigious Gazala Makada Award for Best Paper Presentation in Pediatrics at Virtual OTICON'21, held by All India Occupational Therapist Association (AIOTA). Previously, She has also received the Best Student Award for the Academic Year, 2015-2016, along with 4 Research Paper Publications in International Peer-reviewed Journals.



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Dr. Deepa has added certification in Neonatal Therapy by the National Association of Neonatal Therapists (NANT), with Neuroprotective interventions as her fundamental zone of interest. She has successfully completed her research on an innovative non-pharmacological pain management technique for neonates in the NICU, the first of its kind in India.

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