Occupational therapist may help you

By JUSTIN MUSZYNSKI

STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL — Whether you’re recovering from an injury or suffer from a disability, an occupational therapist may be able to help you get back to your normal life.

“We really want to help people with any kind of a daily task they’re having difficulty with,” said Noelle Fazzzone, a registered occupational therapist at Bristol Hospital.

OT’s, she said, can assist patients with almost any kind of a condition or injury that makes the duties of someone’s job or everyday life arduous. These can include patients with low vision, autism, someone recovering from surgery and other illnesses or conditions.

The month of April, which is nationally recognized as Occupational Therapy Month, is used to bring awareness to the profession that through evaluations and interventions can help a child with disabilities participate in school activities and social situations, assist someone recovering from an injury or help an elderly person stay as independent as possible.

Fazzzone, who works in an inpatient setting, said therapists can help modify everyday tasks like feeding, dressing or bathing, specifically addressing a patient’s individual limitations. A person with low vision, for example, can be taught to recognize where food is on their plate based on a clock system.

A stroke patient struggling with things like brushing his teeth or combing his hair, on the other hand, may not be able to understand exactly what a therapist is asking them to do, Fazzzone said.

In that case, the OT would need to find a way to communicate with them by visually demonstrating or using another method.

Occupational therapists also work with physical therapists, doctors and nurses to make sure they’re all on the same page with each patient.

“We work closely as a team here,” said Fazzzone.

Patients get “personal care at a small community hospital” like Bristol, she said.

Occupational therapy at Bristol Hospital is also conducted in an outpatient setting as well as with its behavioral patients and its home care service.

Lynn Matthews, a registered occupational therapist who is state licensed, specializes in shoulders, elbows and hands, treating patients with orthopedic problems like fractures, carpal tunnel and other issues.

“We work with a lot of worker’s compensation patients, so we’re trying to get them back to their job,” said Matthews, from Bristol Hospital’s Rehab Dynamics 1 clinic on Farmington Avenue.

In a typical day, she said, therapists will evaluate a patient and administer treatment, like applying moist heat or splints.

Patients are also commonly given an at-home exercise program to participate in.

An apple a day may not keep the doctor away

By LINDSEY TANNER

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHICAGO — An apple a day doesn’t necessarily keep the doctor away. That’s according to proverb-busting research that found daily apple eaters had just as many doctor visits as those who ate fewer or no apples.

The findings don’t mean apples aren’t good for you but they do underscore that it takes more than just one kind of food to make a healthy diet and avoid illness.

About one-third of the adults studied said they had no more than one doctor visit in the previous year; the remainder reported at least two visits. A preliminary analysis found apple eaters had slightly fewer visits than apple avoiders — those who ate less than one daily or no apples. But that difference disappeared when the researchers considered weight, race, education, health insurance and other factors that can influence frequency of medical visits.

More about the study, published Monday in JAMA Internal Medicine:

Study details

The researchers looked at data on about 8,400 U.S. adults who took part in government health surveys in 2007-08 and 2009-10. The adults answered questionnaires that included queries about foods they’d eaten in the previous 24 hours and medical care in the past year. About 9 percent of adults studied ate the equivalent of at least one small apple daily. Those who ate less than that were considered apple shunners.

Apple eaters had more education and were less likely to smoke than apple shunners, and fewer of them were white. Apple eaters were slightly less likely to use prescription drugs, but the study lacks information on use of over-the-counter medication and alternative medicine.

Study limitations

Adults’ food choices in the previous 24 hours don’t necessarily reflect usual eating habits. The study lacks information on other foods people ate and it isn’t rigorous enough to determine whether people who choose to eat apples are healthier or unhealthier than those who don’t. The reason for the reported doctor visits also isn’t included in the study.

Lead author Matthew Davis, a health services researcher at the University of Michigan, said while the study questions the proverb, “to really disprove it, you would need a different study design.”