



Implementation of a Therapy Assistant-led Patient Education Program after Breast Surgeries



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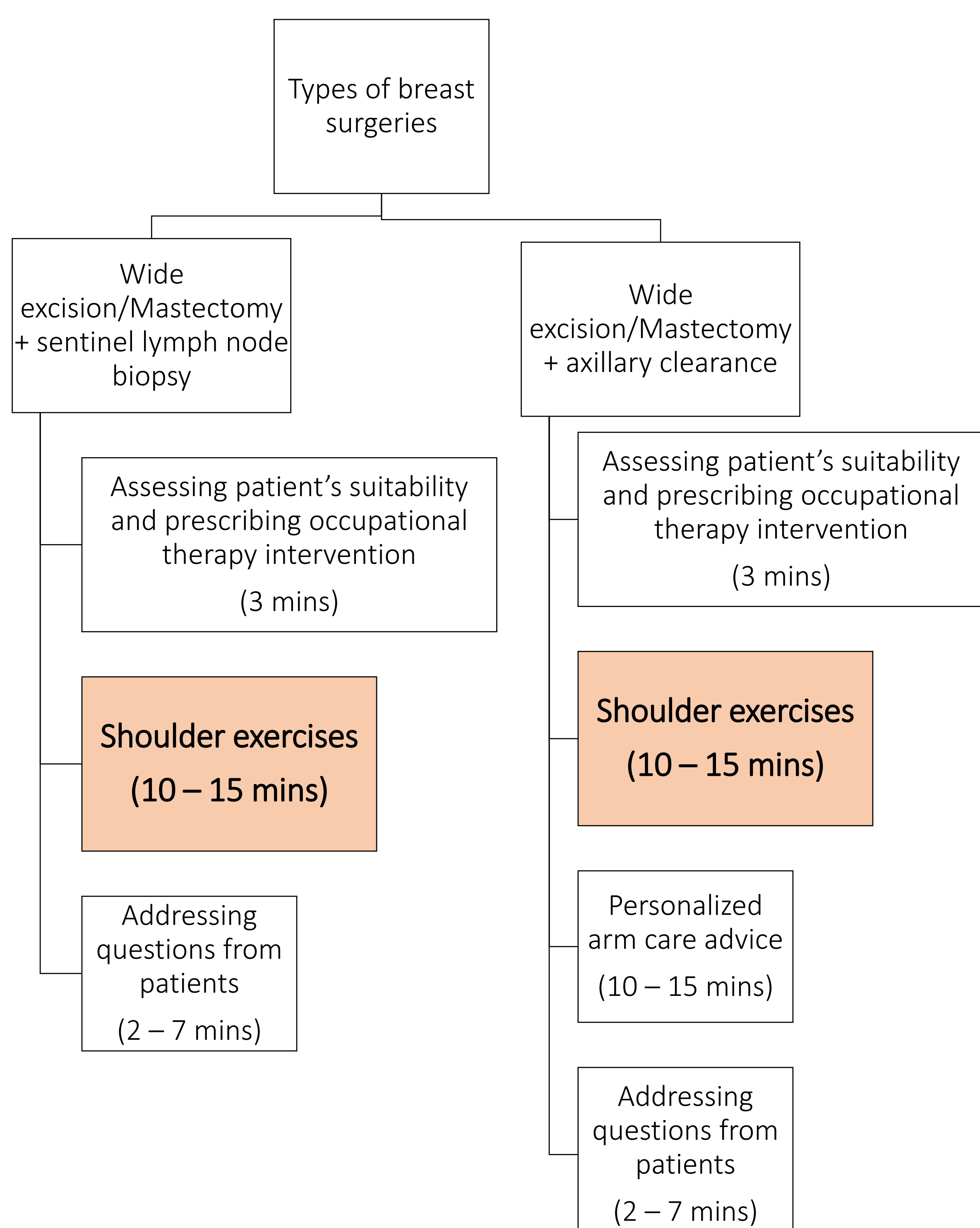
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Introduction

Occupational therapy interventions are integrated in the post-operative breast surgery care pathway to improve the functioning and quality of life for persons with breast cancers. With breast cancers as the most diagnosed cancer among women, there is a need to explore upskilling of Occupational Therapist Assistants (OTAs) to execute routine patient education to alleviate the increasing demands for Occupational Therapists (OTs). The dearth of accredited programs for OTA education and training in Singapore demand a structured on-the-job training program to upskill OTAs to execute routine patient education.

Problem identification

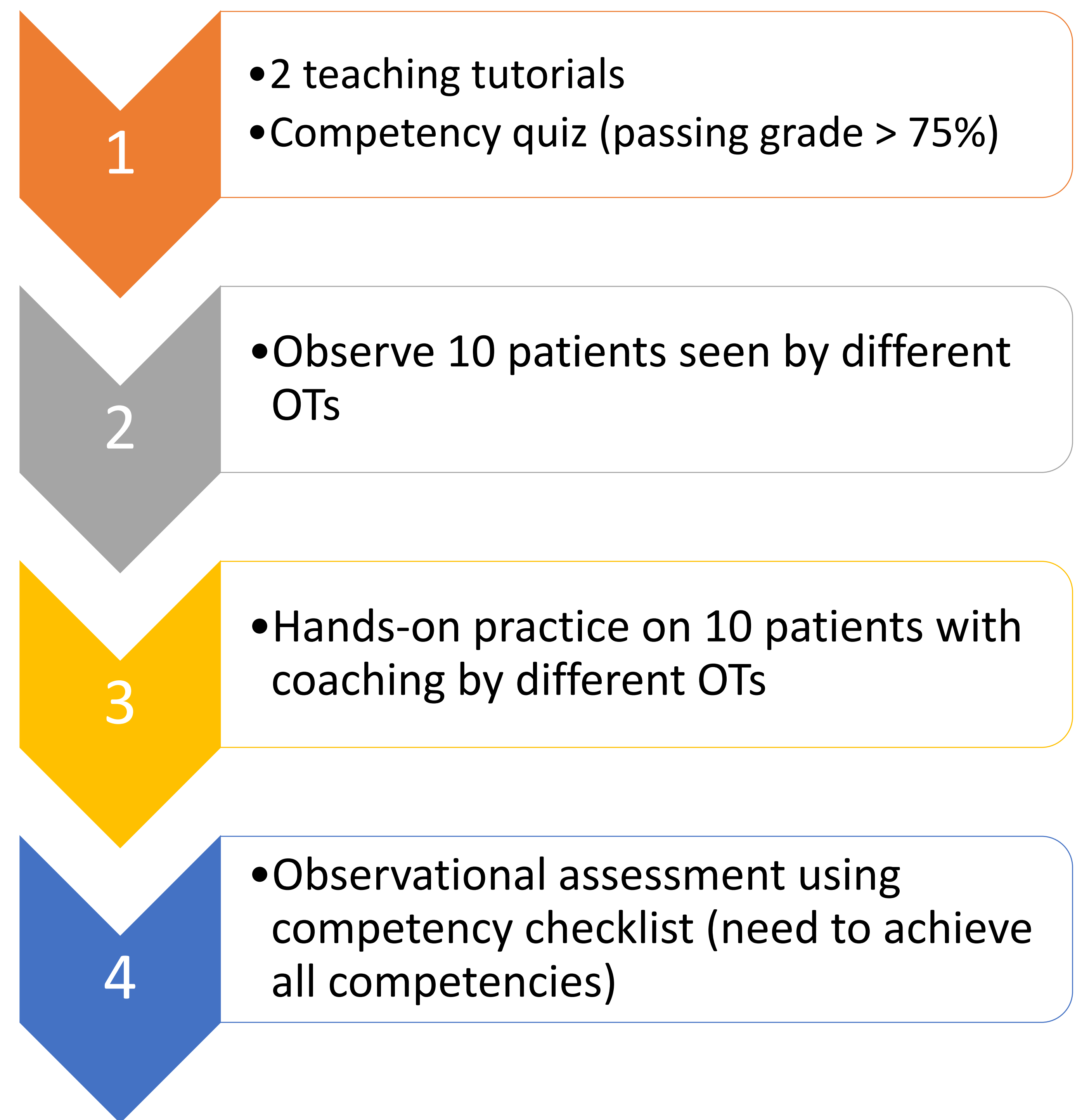
The average time taken for each component of the standard clinical intervention was mapped out. Using the lean philosophy, intellectual waste in the existing clinical practice was identified. Shoulder mobilization exercises, which takes up at least half of the contact time with patients, was identified as a routine and standardized component which could be carried out by OTAs who have received appropriate training.



Aims

To develop an OTA upskilling program and implement a therapy assistant-led patient education program after breast surgeries.

Methodology



Results

The average time spent by OTs on patients after breast surgeries reduced by 64.7%, from 25.7 to 9.07 minutes ($p < .0001$). This translates to significant manpower costs savings of \$3706.97 per year from 12,480 minutes saved per year. OTAs who underwent the upskilling program scored a passing grade in the competency quiz and achieved all the competencies in the observational assessment. The program also received positive feedback from OTAs for its structured and comprehensive training.

Conclusion

Results from this pilot project provide evidence to scale up and apply similar methodology to implement therapy assistant-led patient education programs for other medical conditions. Time savings by OTs can be diverted to attend to more complex patients and provide specialized clinical interventions. These efforts align with SGH Occupational Therapy department's continuous effort to develop and upskill OTAs.