

Occupational Therapy and Artificial Intelligence

A position statement from the Nordic Associations of Occupational Therapists

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www.arbetsterapeuterna.se/english

Preface

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping society, healthcare, and occupational therapy. This joint Nordic position statement reflects our shared commitment to the responsible development, implementation, and use of AI, guided by human expertise, ethical principles, person-centeredness, and the right to participate in everyday life.

We extend our sincere thanks to the lead author, Vera Kaelin, Professor of Occupational Therapy and Digital Technologies at Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences (OST), Research Fellow at the Department of Computing Science at Umeå University, and at the School of Health Sciences at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), for her outstanding work, expertise, and dedication in developing this position statement. We also thank everyone who contributed their knowledge and perspectives throughout the process.

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Together, the Nordic Associations of Occupational Therapists look forward to continuing the dialogue and taking an active role in shaping the responsible use of AI in occupational therapy.

25 November 2026

Ida Kåhlin
President of Sveriges Arbetsterapeuter
Sweden

Tove Holst Skyer
President of Norsk Ergoterapeutforbund
Norway

Mia Dahl Jensen
President of Ergoterapeutforeningen
Denmark

Kirsi Wikman
President of Suomen Toimintaterapeuttiliitto
Finland

Thora Leosdottir
President of Iðjuþjálfafélag Íslands
Iceland

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Artificial intelligence (AI)[1] technology has become an integral part of people's daily lives and healthcare systems and is continuously expanding. Many international organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO) (1) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2,3), have recognized the growing importance of AI technology. They have emphasized its potential to improve health outcomes, increase access to services, and support health systems (2–4). At the same time, they have stressed the need for ethical governance, human oversight, privacy, equity, and the protection of human rights in the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies (2–5). In the Nordic context, these considerations align with the healthcare systems' focus on strong public provision, equitable access, patient participation, and high levels of digitalization (6).

The growing use of AI technology in everyday life and healthcare also affects occupational therapy (7,8). AI technology offers significant opportunities to support occupational therapy practice, education, and research, as well as the everyday lives of individuals who may benefit from occupational therapy (thereafter referred to as individuals[2]). These opportunities are particularly relevant given the shortage of occupational therapists in the Nordic countries (9–11) and beyond (12).

The Nordic Associations of Occupational Therapists stand for AI as a technology to augment occupational therapists' work and expertise as well as individuals' occupational performance and participation in everyday life. To ensure this, the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies must align with the profession's fundamental principles, goals, ethical values, and responsibilities (7,13).

Key terms and definitions

1. AI system is defined by the EU AI Act (19, p.46) as "a machine-based system that is designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy and that may exhibit adaptiveness after deployment, and that, for explicit or implicit objectives, infers, from the input it receives, how to generate outputs such as predictions, content, recommendations, or decisions that can influence physical or virtual environments." This position statement uses the term AI technology to emphasize that AI is a technology, not an intelligence in itself. AI technologies are developed by humans and can be shaped and influenced by human decisions. AI technology can be integrated into digital tools, which are referred to in this statement as AI-supported tool.

2. In this position statement, individuals are defined as those benefiting from occupational therapy services.

Purpose of this Position Statement

The statement presents the Nordic Associations of Occupational Therapists' views on AI technologies in occupational therapy. It describes the opportunities, challenges, and responsibilities related to these technologies. The statement aims to strengthen the role of the occupational therapy profession in the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies. It also provides a basis for ongoing discussion, learning, and advocacy in occupational therapy practice, education, and research.

An Occupational Therapy Perspective on AI Technologies

AI technologies are developing rapidly and have become an integral part of everyday life, healthcare, rehabilitation, and welfare technology. They are used to simplify tasks and increase efficiency. In occupational therapy, AI technologies may reduce administrative work (14,15) such as through automated documentation. They may also support personalized interventions (16), for example, through AI-supported apps that help individuals work towards their goals between therapy sessions. Other examples include AI-supported decision-support tools that assist occupational therapists in their clinical reasoning, and AI-supported assistive technologies, such as personal assistants that help individuals become more independent and participate in everyday activities (17). In addition, AI technologies can also support research and evidence-based practice, for example, by helping with literature searches. In education, AI technologies may support new ways of learning through approaches that adapt to each learner's needs.

The Nordic Associations of Occupational Therapists believe that ongoing development, implementation, and use of AI technologies, and their effects on the profession, individuals, and society, must be addressed proactively by the occupational therapy profession. This responsibility should not be left to others alone. The occupational therapy profession needs to take an active role in collaborating across different fields and at the macro, meso, and micro level. This includes working closely with relevant interest-holders[3], such as individuals, user organizations, computer scientists, health informaticians, employers, managers, politicians, and policymakers.

Occupational Therapy Perspective

Through collaboration, the occupational therapy profession should help shape the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies to ensure that the occupational therapy perspective is adequately represented. This perspective includes a focus on occupation, ethics, and person-centeredness.

3. Interest-holders are being used as a more inclusive term for stakeholders (20).

Focus on Occupation

For AI technologies to be meaningful in occupational therapy, they must align with occupational therapy's focus on participation and occupations, reflecting the realities of everyday life and the complexity of human occupations and environmental contexts (e.g., physical, socioeconomic, social, and cultural context) (7). If AI-supported tools fail to incorporate an occupational perspective, they may reduce the quality of services and support.

Using AI-assisted tools can itself be considered an occupation and is therefore relevant to occupational therapy. This includes ensuring that individuals have equal access to AI technologies that create opportunities for activity performance and participation in daily life. It also means reducing digital inequalities by assessing and developing the competencies individuals need to use AI technologies responsibly.

Focus on Ethics

The development, implementation, and responsible use of AI technologies in occupational therapy must follow the profession's ethical principles (7,13). This means taking a human-centered approach to AI technologies (7,18). It requires collaboration with other interest-holders to identify and address issues such as bias, occupational justice, human rights, autonomy, informed consent, transparency, and privacy. It also requires considerations related to how AI technologies affect occupational therapists' work conditions, individuals' everyday lives, and society as a whole. It also involves critically evaluating AI-generated information and results using occupational therapy knowledge and clinical reasoning.

An ethical approach also means supporting international efforts to promote responsible, trustworthy, equitable, and safe AI technologies (2,4,5). These efforts emphasize the importance of protecting human rights, privacy, and autonomy, reducing environmental harm, and ensuring that the development and use of AI technologies are socially and ecologically sustainable.

Focus on Person-Centeredness

AI technologies should be developed, implemented, and used with a person-centered approach. Individuals should have the opportunity to make informed decisions about whether and how they want to integrate AI technologies into their therapy and everyday lives. To support these decisions, individuals need clear and accessible information about the AI-supported tools available to them. Occupational therapists should explain this information in a way that individuals can understand. For example, they should explain how an AI-supported app collects, uses, and stores personal data so that individuals can decide whether the tool is right for them.

Throughout the remainder of this statement, the term "occupational therapy perspective" refers to the three areas described above: occupation, ethics and person-centeredness.

Responsibilities Related to AI Technology and Occupational Therapy

The development, implementation, and use of AI technologies should follow the occupational therapy perspective described above. To achieve this, responsibility should be shared among all relevant interest-holders rather than placed on individual occupational therapists alone. The responsibilities outlined below are not intended to be comprehensive, and some may apply to more than one group.

Importantly, in Nordic countries, trade union representatives should also be involved in decisions about the implementation and use of AI technologies in the workplace. Such decisions should follow established processes for consultation and shared decision-making, in line with the Nordic tradition of social dialogue, participatory work design, and collective agreements.

Responsibilities at the National and State Policy Level

- Establish national regulations and policies for the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies in occupational therapy. These should follow the occupational therapy perspective described above.
- Ensure equal opportunities to access, learn about, and use AI technologies, regardless of disability, social economic background, language, or level of digital literacy.

Responsibilities of Employers

- Establish clear internal guidelines for the responsible implementation and use of AI technologies. These guidelines should follow the occupational therapy perspective and comply with national regulations and policies.
- Ensure that occupational therapists remain responsible for professional assessments, decisions, and interventions, including when AI technologies support decision-making.
- Provide access to high-quality training, further learning opportunities, and sufficient time and resources for staff to develop the competencies needed to implement and use AI technologies in line with the occupational therapy perspective described above.
- Fostering a workplace culture that encourages discussions and shared learning about the implementation and use of AI technologies.
- Ensure that designated staff check whether digital tools (e.g., apps) incorporate AI technology. Before these tools are implemented, these staff members should critically assess whether they align with the occupational therapy perspective.
- Support the development of data-driven AI technologies that enhance occupational therapy practice by ensuring that systematically collected data, including data in health record systems, adequately capture occupational therapy outcomes.

Responsibilities of Practicing Occupational Therapists

- Follow the employer's guidelines for the responsible use and implementation of AI technologies.
- Critically evaluate the output of AI technologies using occupational therapy knowledge and clinical reasoning to ensure they are accurate, appropriate, and relevant to the individual's context as well as their participation and occupational goals.
- Provide clear and accessible information about AI technologies to individuals receiving services. This allows them to make informed decisions about whether to use these technologies in therapy and daily life.
- Continue developing AI-related competencies, keep up to date with AI-related developments relevant to occupational therapy, and the profession's ethical principles through lifelong learning.

Responsibilities of Occupational Therapy Educators

- Include the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies from an occupational therapy perspective in occupational therapy education.
- Prepare future occupational therapists to engage in the development of human-centered AI technologies for occupational therapy. This includes, for example, collaboration with computer scientists and informaticians as well as individuals and user organizations.
- Ensure that AI technologies are used appropriately and transparently in teaching and student assignments. Provide clear guidance on their use and critically evaluate the quality of students' work.

Responsibilities of Occupational Therapy Students

- Develop foundational knowledge and a critical understanding of the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies from an occupational therapy perspective.
- Develop the competencies needed for professional practice, including critically assess AI-generated outputs using occupational therapy knowledge and clinical reasoning. Students should understand that AI technologies can support professional reasoning but cannot replace professional responsibility or ethical judgment.
- Use AI technologies responsibly in their studies, maintain academic integrity, and follow university guidelines for their use.

Responsibilities of the Occupational Therapy Research Community

- Work with computer scientists, health informaticians, and other relevant interest-holders to develop and evaluate human-centered AI technologies based on an occupational therapy perspective.
- Provide research evidence to support the regulation, implementation, and use of AI technologies in line with the occupational therapy perspective. This also includes studying the effects of AI technologies on individuals, occupational therapists, and society.
- Share research findings with relevant interest-holders to keep them informed about the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies from an occupational therapy perspective.

Responsibilities of National Associations of Occupational Therapists

- Advocate for guidance, professional standards, and policies that ensure the development, implementation, and use of AI technologies are aligned with the occupational therapy perspective.
- Promote access to high-quality training to develop the competencies needed to implement and use AI technologies in line with the occupational therapy perspective described above.
- Advocate for access to resources, continuing education, and evidence-based knowledge related to AI technologies and occupational therapy.
- Encourage occupational therapists to engage in interdisciplinary collaboration in the development, implementation and use of AI technologies.



The Nordic Associations of Occupational Therapists hold that

AI is viewed as a technology to augment occupational therapists' work

AI technologies should support occupational therapists' professional work as well as individuals' occupational performance and participation in everyday life. Human expertise and decision-making must remain central.

The occupational therapy profession should actively contribute to the development, implementation, use, and regulations of AI technologies relevant to occupational therapy

Occupational therapists should take an active role in interdisciplinary collaboration, including computer scientists, health informaticians, individuals, and user-organizations. This helps ensure that AI technologies relevant to occupational therapy reflect an occupational therapy perspective, with a strong focus on occupation, ethics and person-centeredness.

Occupational therapists should also promote equitable access to AI technologies and address digital inequalities. This includes assessing and supporting the competencies required to use these technologies effectively and responsibly.

AI technologies should always be used with human expert oversight

AI technologies and their outputs should be critically evaluated using occupational therapy knowledge and clinical reasoning to ensure accuracy and relevance for individuals, the occupational therapy profession, and society. AI technologies can support professional reasoning but should not replace professional responsibility or ethical judgment.

Individuals should be supported in making informed choices about AI technologies through a person-centered approach

Individuals should receive clear and accessible information about AI technologies that may be relevant for occupational therapy, including their benefits, limitations, and how data are collected and used. This allows individuals to decide whether and how they want to include AI technologies in their therapy and everyday lives.

Continuous learning about AI technologies should be a clear priority for the occupational therapy profession

The development, implementation, use, and regulation of AI technologies relevant to occupational therapy require continuous learning. This helps ensure that these technologies are understood, critically evaluated, and used in ways that align with the occupational therapy perspective. High-quality education and training, as well as opportunities to share knowledge and experiences should support this learning.

The responsibility for the development, implementation, use, and regulation of AI technologies should be shared among relevant interest-holders

The development, implementation, use, and regulation of AI technologies relevant to occupational therapy should involve shared responsibility among relevant stakeholders. These include policymakers, employers, occupational therapy practitioners, educators, students, researchers, user organizations, individuals, trade unions and professional associations. This requires meaningful participation and should be supported by consultation, social dialogue, and co-determination.

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