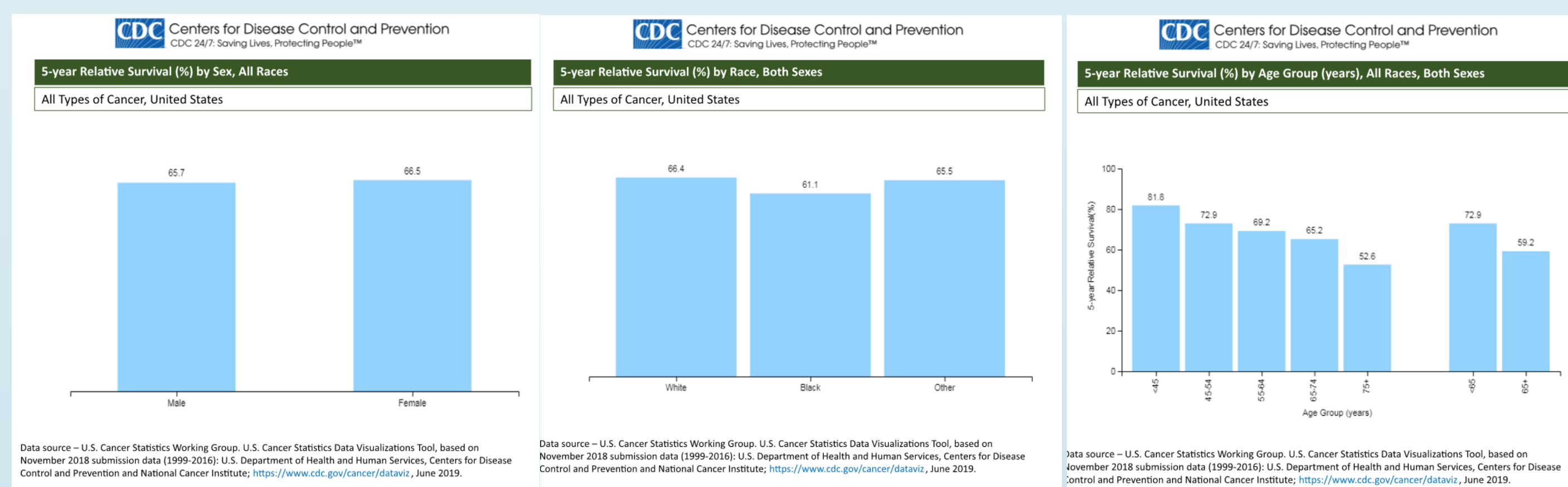


Background Information: Medical advances have improved the five-year survival rate for patients diagnosed with cancer and some late-stage cancers that once were terminal have now become manageable, chronic conditions. Because of this, more individuals with cancer as well as survivors of cancer are re-entering the workforce. Resuming the role of worker is considered an important step in recovery for many. Occupational therapy (OT) can play an important role in facilitating a successful transition back to work for both cancer patients and survivors.

CURRENT STATISTICS: MORE LONG TERM SURVIVORS

5 year survival rate is 65.6% in the United States



- ❖ Individuals with a cancer diagnosis under age 65 have nearly a 73% 5-year survival rate
- ❖ This demographic represents those still in the work force

(Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2017)

More individuals surviving cancer means ...

- ❖ More survivors are re-entering the work force
- ❖ Having to work longer until retirement in order to maintain financial stability
- ❖ Managing a chronic medical condition
- ❖ Employers need to accommodate individuals with cancer and survivors on a more regular basis in work environments



IMPACT OF SIDE EFFECTS OF CANCER TREATMENT

Chemotherapy

- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Prone to infection
- ❖ Nausea/Vomiting
- ❖ Mood Changes
- ❖ "Chemo Brain"
- ❖ Weight Changes
- ❖ Hair loss



Radiation

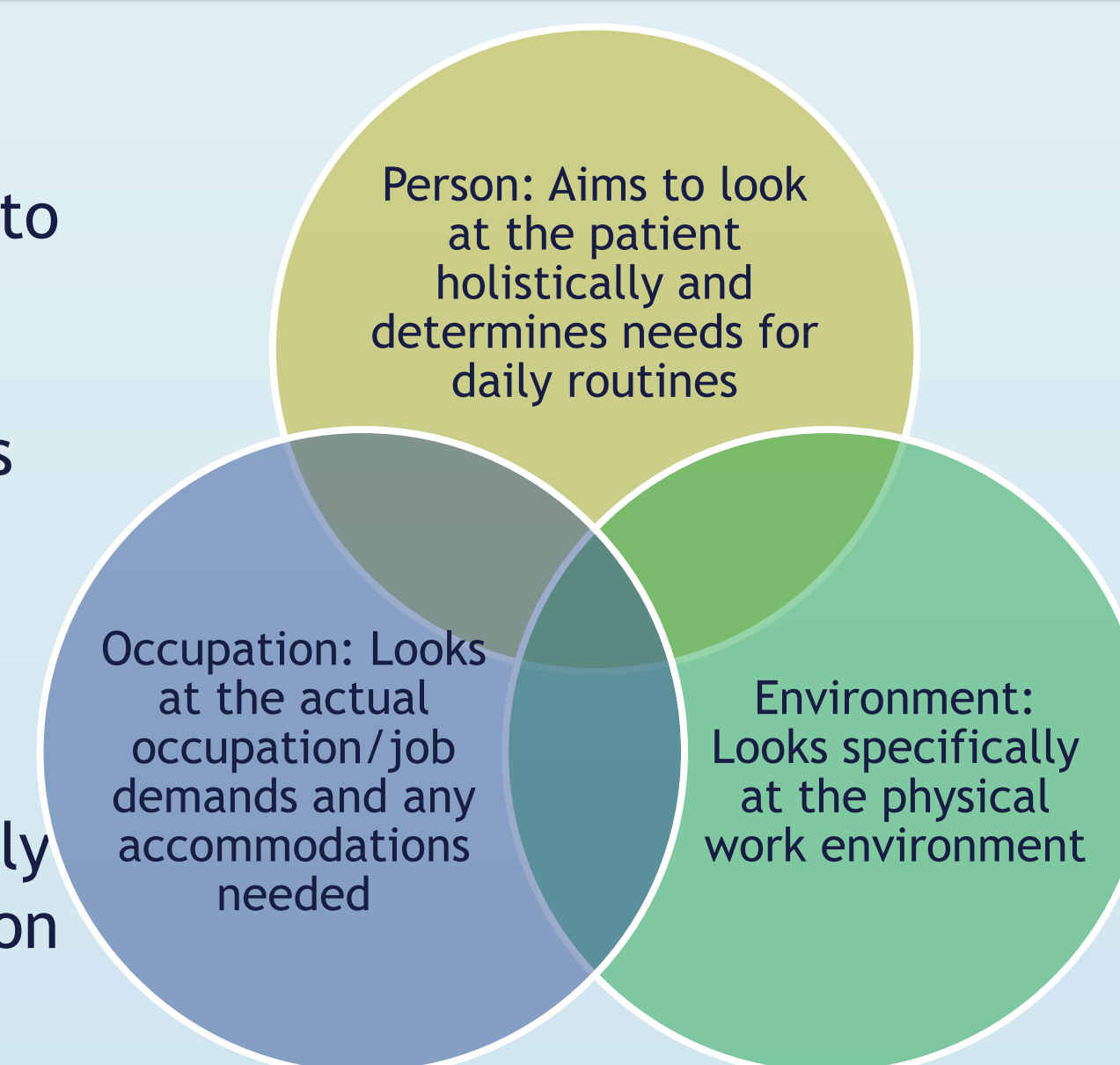
- ❖ Fatigue
- ❖ Eating problems
- ❖ Skin problems
- ❖ Hair loss

(American Cancer Society, 2018)

OT TO SUPPORT RETURN TO WORK

Assess Emotional & Mental Readiness

- ❖ Temporal (oriented to time, place, & person)
- ❖ Handle relationships with co-workers, bosses, clients that one would interact with at work
- ❖ Emotionally/mentally feel ready to focus on work life
- ❖ Able to concentrate on work tasks



Assess Physical Readiness

- ❖ Able to perform job duties physically with or without accommodations
- ❖ Able to perform ADLs to get through the work day
- ❖ Able to perform IADLs necessary for one's job

(Stergiou-Kita, Pritlove, Holness, Kirsh, van Eerd, Duncan & Jones, 2016)

Occupational Therapy Interventions

Person/Client Centered

- ❖ Provide individuals with education regarding the work place, encouragement and counseling on work-related subjects
- ❖ Address fears and concerns regarding re-entry to work
- ❖ Problem solve coping skills and mechanisms to utilize at work in real time as issues arise

Person/Environment Centered

- ❖ Visit the individual's work place to determine what physical accommodations are needed so the client can be productive
- ❖ Provide information regarding how to address misconceptions and myths related to cancer in the work environment

(Desiron, Donceel, Rijk, & Van Hoof, 2013)

BENEFITS OF RETURNING TO WORK

Client Reasons

- ❖ Psychosocially motivated
- ❖ Return to work meant a return to normalcy
- ❖ Re-entry to work made survivors' feel resilient
- ❖ Sense of value
- ❖ Meaningfulness
- ❖ Identity
- ❖ Love of the job
- ❖ Financial incentive not frequently cited, when it was, it was not a predominant reason for returning to work

Client Perspectives

- "The reason I went back to work and wanted to go back as quickly [as possible] was to maintain a sense of normalcy in my own life" -Lynn
- "I have this expectation that I should be able to return to work because I'm tough" -Alyson
- "One of my competitors had called all my clients and so I made the decision ...I spent the whole weekend calling all my customers ... [and] said it was going to be business as usual...Four or five days post-surgery when I still had drains in place I went to my first...meeting with one of my clients...Nobody knew." -Mary

(Morrison & Thomas, 2014)

GAPS IN ONCOLOGY CARE THAT OT CAN FILL

Patient Education:

Make sure individuals are informed of their legal rights and protections (FMLA, ADA)

Data Collection:

Clinical trials on cancer interventions & treatments
How cancer treatment affects individual in short & long term in their worker-role.

Working with Employers:

Recommend and ensure that accommodations are made so individuals can be productive workers

(Braveman, 2017)

WHAT'S NEXT FOR OT IN ONCOLOGY?

OT Services are Needed in Oncology

- ❖ Studies done thus far have shown success in helping clients successfully return to work
- ❖ More research is needed to study concrete occupational therapy interventions that will work in this field
- ❖ Growing population that could benefit from OT services (more survivors, more people living with cancer as a chronic condition)

(Braveman, 2017)

"Occupational therapy practitioners can play a key role in return to work for people with cancer by articulating our distinct value in return to work interventions, 'to improve health and quality of life through facilitating participation and engagement in occupations, the meaningful, necessary, and familiar activities of everyday life'"

(Braveman, 2017, p. 27)

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