

Developing a Program Manual for Tufts *Dance for Healthy Aging with Parkinson's Disease*

Elizabeth Docherty, OT/s, Linda Tickle-Degnen, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, Augusta Hixon Polhemus OTD, OTR/L

Introduction

Parkinson's Disease (PD)

PD is a progressive, neurodegenerative condition affecting over 10 million people worldwide, causing both motor & non-motor symptoms.^{1,2,3}

Dance has many research-backed benefits for people with PD: ⁴⁻⁶



Improves **motor skills**



Promotes **self-management** of symptoms



Improves **mood & confidence**



Increases **social interaction & connection**

Tufts Dance for Healthy Aging with Parkinson's Disease

A two-day workshop connecting local community members living with PD, care partners, professionals, and & Tufts OT students.

Guest instructors integrate principles from *PD Movement Lab* and *Dance for PD*®, using dance, imagery, & music to foster expressive movement & social connection.

As an **integrated part of the Tufts OT curriculum** students learn: ^{7,8}



Movement-based interventions



Enhanced **therapeutic communication**



Creative **problem solving**



Interdisciplinary **collaboration**

Purpose & Aims

Develop a **program manual for Tufts Dance for Healthy Aging with Parkinson's Disease** to ensure consistency & sustainability in planning, implementation, & follow-up.

Aim 1:

Create a systematized manual for consistency in planning, delivery, & evaluation processes.

Aim 2:

Strengthen program organization & implementation to support integration into the OT curriculum.

Aim 3:

Support long-term program sustainability with clear guidelines, templates, & adaptable resources.

Methods



Program Manualization

The Program Manual

A comprehensive manual for organizers of the *Dance for Healthy Aging* program outlining key guidelines & best practices for planning & executing the event with a supplemental digital resource folder containing templates & helpful materials

Manual Development Process

- Reviewed past materials to understand structure & identify areas for improvement
- Collaborated with organizers to discuss key components
- Combined past participation and 2025 direct manager role to shape manual content
- Collected feedback & implemented revisions

Key Components of the Manual

1

Program Overview

2

Foundational Framework

3

Operations & Logistics

4

Outreach & Engagement

5

Event Planning & Execution

6

Planning Tools & Resources

Organization & Creating Resources

- ✓ Developed centralized digital resource folder with planning materials and a user guide
- ✓ Created phase-specific planning checklists & detailed program timeline
- ✓ Designed templates for outreach & participant communication
- ✓ Streamlined registration process to manage event capacity
- ✓ Piloted fundraising strategies and outlined a detailed event budget
- ✓ Clarified team roles & responsibilities, including for students & volunteers

Results

Feedback & Refinement

Reviewers (n=8) included Tufts OT faculty, program organizers, volunteers, instructors, & external reviewers with no prior involvement in the program. Feedback was collected verbally & in writing using a rubric around four key themes:

Clarity

- Writing style described as clear & easy to understand
- Suggested section re-ordering for better flow

Thoroughness

- Add detail about recruiting & overseeing volunteers
- Add research-backed benefits of dance & data on participant experiences

Accuracy

- Cite specific ACOTE standards relevant to OT student learning
- Ensure procedures reflect current practices; update during event

Usefulness

- Instructions are clear to organizers; monitor for reviewer bias
- Consolidate resources/checklists into one section

Revisions Implemented

- Reorganized order of sections & improved spacing for readability
- Created appendix with resources, links, and supporting materials
- Added detailed checklists and timelines
- Incorporated participant reflections and research-supported benefits of program
- Included ACOTE standards relevant to OT student learning outcomes
- Updated manual with additional details based on 2025 event experience

Discussion

Impact

- The manual addresses need for **improved structure & organization** within the *Dance for Healthy Aging* program
- Promotes **student engagement** with defined roles, expectations, & planning resources
- Streamlines collaboration** & planning between students, faculty, & community partners
- Supports long-term **experiential learning & professional development**
- Highlights the value of **arts-based community programming** within OT education

"It's comprehensive, well-organized, and will be incredibly helpful for future organizers" (Reviewer)



Conclusion

The manual provides a sustainable framework for future implementation, ensuring consistency in planning, delivery, & evaluation, while strengthening integration into the OT curriculum, supporting the program's long-term success & impact.

Future Steps

- Ongoing iterations to reflect participant feedback & relevance
- Disseminate as a guide for similar programs or expansion beyond Tufts
- Implement a specific sustainability plan for the program

Acknowledgements

A sincere thank you to Linda Tickle-Degnen & Augusta Hixon Polhemus for your mentorship & guidance. Thank you to Mary Barnes & Meredith Grinnell for your feedback & support. Thank you to Pam Quinn, David Leventhal, & Renata Celichowska for their dedication & role in making this work possible. Grateful for the PD community for their presence & willingness to dance with us!

Contacts:

Elizabeth.Docherty@tufts.edu

Linda.tickle_degnen@tufts.edu

Materials & References

