Artificial Intelligence in Recreational Therapy: Navigating a Transforming Landscape

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International Knowledge Exchange

ATRA
EMPOWERING RECREATIONAL THERAPISTS

AI Is Already Here

AI tools are already integrated into recreational therapy—from documentation and scheduling to research and intervention planning.

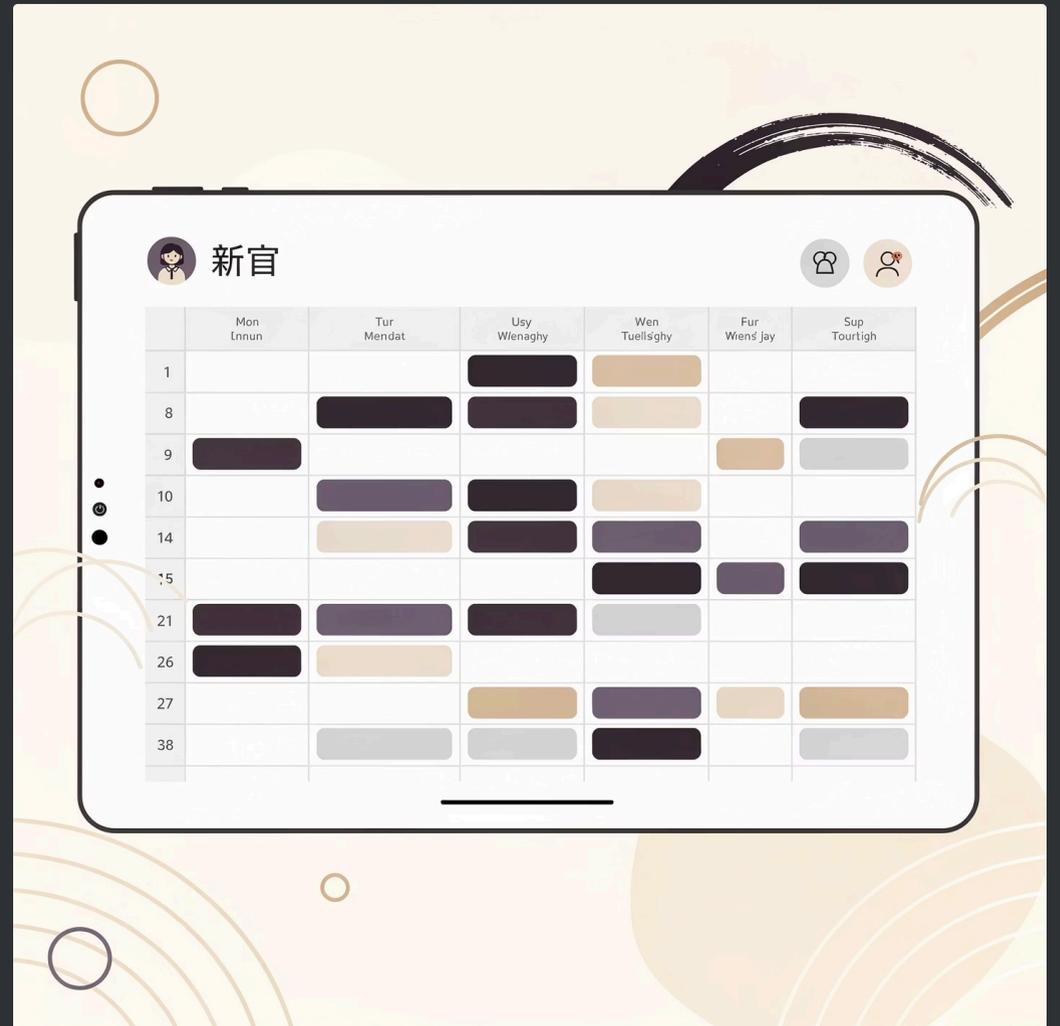# How AI is Being Used in RT Practice Today

Documentation Support

Automating notes, streamlining charting, and reducing administrative burden so therapists can focus on client care.

Administrative Optimization

Scheduling, resource allocation, and workflow management enhanced through intelligent automation.

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Assessment Assistance

Data analysis tools that help identify patterns, track progress, and inform clinical decision-making.

Intervention Planning

AI-assisted brainstorming for treatment ideas, activity adaptations, and evidence-based interventions.

The Visible and the Hidden

Visible AI Tools

- ChatGPT and Claude for documentation drafting and activity planning
- Perplexity for research
- Voice-to-text transcription services

Invisible Integration

- Embedded algorithms in electronic health records
- Automated scheduling within facility systems
- Predictive analytics in administrative platforms
- Background data processing and pattern recognition

Many practitioners use AI daily without realizing the extent of its integration into workplace systems and professional tools.

The Promise of AI in Recreational Therapy

Efficiency Gains

Educational Transformation

Practice Enhancement

Privacy, Confidentiality, and Compliance

The Challenge

Many popular AI tools are not HIPAA-compliant and may not meet healthcare or educational data protection standards. Client information entered into these systems can be stored, analyzed, or used for training without proper safeguards.

Critical Questions:

- Is the tool certified for healthcare use?
- Where is client data stored and who has access?
- What are the legal and ethical implications?
- How do we protect vulnerable populations?

Practical Strategy

Always verify compliance before using AI tools with client information. When in doubt, anonymize data or avoid AI altogether for sensitive content.

Ethical Imperative

Our first responsibility is to protect client privacy and maintain the trust inherent in the therapeutic relationship.

Professional Integrity and Human Competency

The Deskilling Risk

As AI automates tasks, do practitioners lose essential skills and clinical judgment developed through practice?

Maintaining Expertise

Practitioners must stay informed, verify AI outputs, and maintain the human expertise that defines our profession.

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Professional Development

When AI can complete continuing education modules autonomously, what happens to genuine learning and competency?

The Balance

AI should augment, not replace, professional judgment and the therapeutic skills we bring to client care.

"The goal is not to become dependent on AI, but to thoughtfully integrate it while preserving the human expertise and judgment that make recreational therapy effective."

Preserving the Therapeutic Relationship

The Heart of Our Work

Recreational therapy is fundamentally about **human connection**—the trust, empathy, and relationship between therapist and client that cannot be replicated by technology.

Key Considerations:

- When does AI augmentation enhance therapeutic care?

- When does it create distance or detract from connection?

- How do we maintain transparency with clients about AI use?

- What are client expectations and rights to know?

Technology must serve the relationship, never replace it.

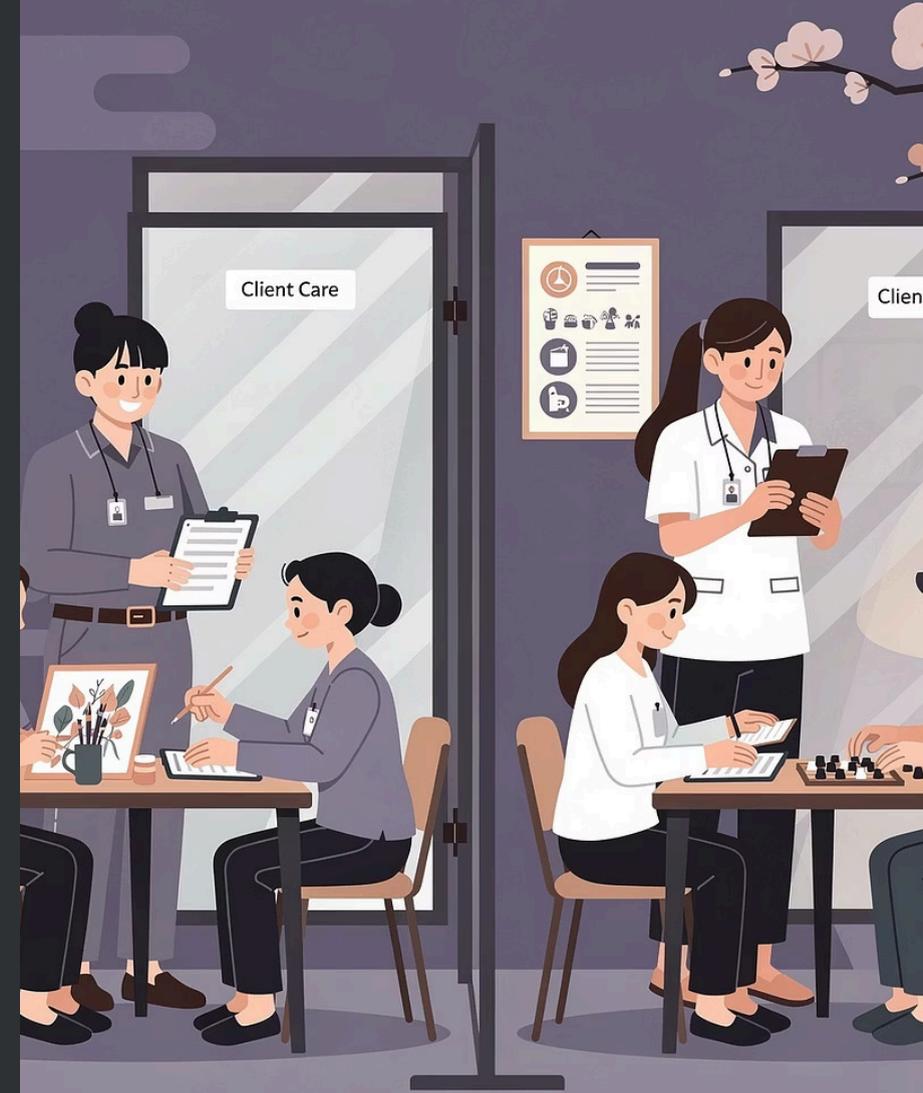# Strategic Considerations for Our Profession

Training and Education

Prepare recreational therapists for thoughtful AI integration through education on capabilities, limitations, and ethical use.

Professional Guidelines

Develop standards and best practices specific to recreational therapy that address privacy, competency, and client protection.

Quality Assurance

Establish verification processes for AI-generated content, including fact-checking and clinical appropriateness reviews.

Advocacy and Policy

Engage in professional advocacy to shape how AI is regulated and implemented in healthcare and therapeutic settings.

Consumer Protection

Center client welfare, informed consent, and protection of vulnerable populations in all AI integration decisions.

Key Takeaways

AI is already here

Balance opportunity with responsibility

Verify, don't assume

Protect our clients

Lead the conversation

Q&A

Share Your Experience

What AI tools are you currently using in your practice?

Your Concerns

What questions or concerns do you have about AI integration?

Best Practices

What strategies have worked in your setting?

Moving Forward

How can we support each other in this transition?

Thank you

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