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Sourcing and Evaluating Products and Designs

*Desleigh de Jonge, MPhil (OccThy), Grad Cert Soc Sci and
Melanie Hoyle, BSc (Psych), MOccThySt, Grad Dip Health Sci, Post Grad Dip Psych*

Therapists use a wide range of mainstream and specialized products and design solutions to address a variety of occupational performance concerns and difficulties. Consequently, they need access to a number of different information systems to locate information on what is available. They also need to be able to evaluate the relative benefits of each option to determine the best solution for each client and his or her household. The first section of this chapter overviews the information systems therapists can use to gain an understanding of environmental interventions and then examines the nature of information provided by each of these systems. Therapists can use these resources to locate suitable options for individual clients, to enable them to remain informed about developments in the area, and to build a body of knowledge about the range of interventions available.

The second section of this chapter outlines a systematic process for reviewing and comparing products and designs and details considerations when evaluating the relative merits of various options. It identifies the information therapists require to undertake a thorough comparison of options and discusses the unique perspective clients bring to the decision-making process. It also highlights the benefits of drawing on the experiences of other

therapists, designers, builders, and clients to understand the advantages and disadvantages of various products and designs. The role of evidence and standards in reviewing the suitability of options is also discussed, as are the evolution and principles of good design, which strive to ensure that products and designs used for older people and people with disabilities are aesthetic, flexible, and functional in the long term.

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

By the end of this chapter, the reader will be able to:

- ✦ Identify and discuss the benefits and limitations of various information systems used to gather information on products and designs
- ✦ Describe a systematic process for reviewing products and designs
- ✦ Identify key issues in evaluating the potential value and effectiveness of product and design solutions
- ✦ Describe the development of design and the implications of design approaches for older people and people with disabilities