

Gardening is Therapy: Promoting Health and Wellness in Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD)

Athena Paguio & Mary Thelander, MOT OTR/L ATP

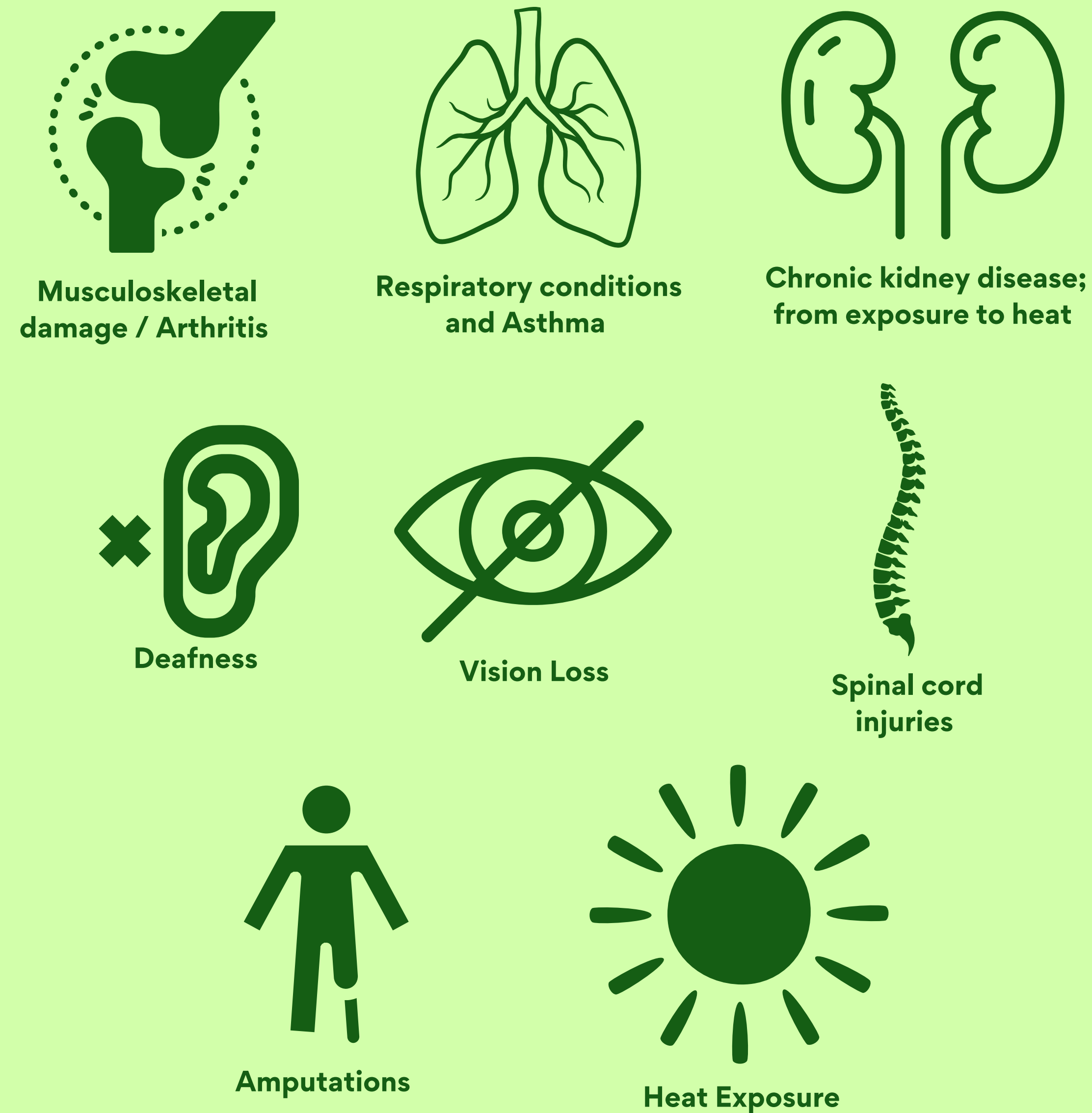
Background

- 12.9% of the farm population lives with a disability (Jones, 2019). 634,000 individuals in the U.S. agricultural sector are affected by disability.
- **IDD includes a broad range of conditions characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.**
- Community-based interventions, including **horticultural therapy and gardening programs**, have provided positive effects on improving the overall health of individuals with IDD.

Objectives

- Understand the **impact of intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD)** in the agricultural community
- Identify **health disparities** for individuals with IDD.
- Explore the role of occupational therapy (OT) and **community-based interventions to support individuals with IDD** in the agricultural community.

Common Disabilities in Agriculture



Health Disparities Among Individuals with IDD

- **Increased rates of chronic conditions:** Obesity, diabetes, heart disease, mental health disorders (Rudolph, 2019).
- **Barriers to Healthcare Access:** Limited awareness, communication barriers, and lack of specialized training among providers (Dennis, 2024).
- **Quality of Life Impacts:** Higher instances of isolation due to stigma and limited social engagement opportunities. (Simplican, 2015)

Health Outcomes of people with IDD (based on research)

- **Mental Health:** Individuals with IDD are at a greater risk of depression, anxiety, and behavioral disorders (Baik et al., 2024).
- **Physical Health Issues:** Higher BMI increased sedentary behavior, and inadequate physical activity contribute to obesity and related health problems (Lampert, 2021).
- **Increased rates of chronic illnesses:** respiratory issues and pulmonary conditions (Puvvula, 2022), musculoskeletal discomfort (Du, 2022).

Community Based Interventions and Programs

Benefits of Community Gardening for People with IDD

- **Skills Development:** community-based programs foster: social interactions, independence, and self-efficacy (Azmi, 2023)
- **Social Interaction:** Builds connections, reduces isolation, fosters community bonds. (Azmi, 2023; Tracey, 2023).
- **Nutritional Education:** Teaches healthier dietary practices for improved wellness. (Azmi, 2023)



Role of Occupational Therapy

Client-Centered Approaches

- **Assessment and Intervention**
 - OTs utilize client-centered methods to assess and address the unique needs of individuals with IDD. (Dennis, 2024). Farmsite Assessments can promote farming for people with health conditions or disabilities.



Key Interventions

- **Skill Development:** Training in daily living and social skills.
- **Adaptive Strategies:** Modifying activities to support independence.
- **Collaboration with Community Organizations:** With public health, mental health, and community organizations to enhance the reach of interventions (Wilhite & Jaco, 2014)

Assistive Technology



Contact Information

- ✉ apaguio@salud.unm.edu
- ✉ mthelander@salud.unm.edu
- 🌐 <https://agrability.nmsu.edu>

Disclosure

This project is a collaboration with the University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, New Mexico AgrAbility and Mandy's Farm. The presenters have no financial interest with any assessment/intervention strategies or products discussed in this poster.



References

