

Searching for Occupational Therapy Research Evidence

Sources of Information

Clinicians integrate information from a wide range of sources when making clinical decisions. Common sources of information include clinical experience, clients, undergraduate and continuing education, textbooks, and discussion amongst colleagues. Information from well-performed research provides another source that at times has the advantage of being up to date and less prone to bias. The term 'evidence' within the evidence-based practice framework therefore most commonly refers to *clinically relevant research* evidence, whether it is quantitative or qualitative in nature (Sackett, Richardson, Rosenberg & Haynes, 2000). Integrating research evidence with information from other sources is the challenge of evidence-based practice.

Sources of Research Evidence

With millions of new health research articles published each year, methods for focusing on the most relevant information are important. Of the thousands of articles relevant to occupational therapy only a small number of papers have a clinical focus and use the most appropriate methods to provide the information we need.

Two questions can guide the search for research evidence:

1. What type of research evidence to look for?
2. How to find it?

1. Type of evidence

Different types of research methodologies provide 'best' answers for different types of clinical questions. Aim to find papers using the best methods for a particular type of clinical question (not just RCTs!). For example:

Questions about treatment:

(E.g. Is the treatment effective? Which treatment is the most effective? How long should treatment continue for? How intensive? What are the possible complications of treatment?)

- ◆ Look for systematic reviews, randomised controlled trials, and in some cases single-case experimental research.

Questions about client's experiences/concerns:

- ◆ Look for qualitative research

Questions about the likely course of disease/disability, likely occupational issues:

- ◆ Look for cohort/follow-up/longitudinal studies

Questions about cost-effectiveness:

- ◆ Look for economic studies comparing all outcomes against costs

Bennett JW, Glasziou P. Evidence-based practice: what does it really mean?
Disease Manage Health Outcomes 1997; 1: 277-85.

Keep searching until the BEST AVAILABLE evidence is located

2. How to find evidence

Specialist databases or journals that have already appraised the literature may save time. For example:

Databases:

- ◆ Cochrane library
- ◆ OTseeker (www.otseeker.com)
- ◆ PEDro (Physiotherapy Evidence Database) (www.pedro.fhs.usyd.edu.au/index.html)
- ◆ OTCATS (eg www.OTCATS.com)

Journals/websites:

- ◆ The Australian Occupational Therapy Journal (Critically Appraised Papers)
- ◆ OT Now Critically Appraised Papers (CAOT)
- ◆ Evidence Based Series (AOTA)
- ◆ Evidence Based Medicine journal series
- ◆ Clinical Evidence

OR

You may need to use the larger databases eg. PubMed, MEDLINE, Embase, *CINAHL*, *PsycINFO*, *ERIC*, *AMED*, *CancerLit*, *Ageline* etc

Literature Searching Strategies

Two useful internet resources that provide information on literature searching strategies are listed below:

ADEPT

ADEPT stands for: "Applying Diagnosis Etiology Prognosis and Therapy methodological filters for retrieving the evidence". It is a workshop and distance learning based programme created for South Thames Regional Library Service by Andrew Booth, Director of Information Resources, School of Health and Related Research, University of Sheffield, and designed by Andrew Booth and Alison Hicks.

CASP (Critical Appraisal Skills Program)

Sources of evidence

This site provides a guide to publications, databases, web resources and organisations that are useful in helping to locate evidence-based health care information

Search filters

CASP also provides search filters for a range of bibliographic databases.

Finding Free Full Text Journals

Many online journals offer full-text articles either immediately or after a specified time period. The following 3 sites list journals with some to full free text access.

Free Medical Journals

<http://www.freemedicaljournals.com>

Directory of Open Access Journals

<http://www.doaj.org>

BMC Journals

<http://www.biomedcentral.com/browse/journals/>