
Editorial: Encouraging diversification of research methods to bridge the occupational therapy evidence-practice gap

It is my pleasure and privilege to take over as Editor in Chief of the *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy* (IJOT) at this time. I wholeheartedly thank Dr Katie Cremin for all her stellar work in his role in the past 12 months and, prior to that, Dr Carol Hills for her leadership and development of this journal. I am grateful for the Editorial team who are continuing to ensure robust peer review and support of all occupational therapy researchers – academic and clinically based, experienced and students – to ensure this proudly Open Access journal can continue to contribute to evidence-based practice in Ireland and internationally.

As I review through the five articles for this edition, it strikes me how our profession has embraced a mix of methods to address gaps in knowledge and/or practise relevant to occupational therapy. Firstly, Yoo (2023) effectively applies scoping review methodology to map the evidence on sleep interventions in mental health, a great example of this popular form of review structure being used to explore an area of clinical relevance to occupational therapy. Examples of cross-sectional survey work include illuminating about student knowledge and attitudes towards older adults with dementia (Gavin *et al.*, 2023), as well as investigating which outcome measures are used by occupational therapy staff in adult social care settings in the UK (Davenport and Underhill, 2023), who interestingly using social media as primary way of recruiting participants. Qualitative network analysis was used by Khalafbeigi *et al.* (2023) to elicit female adults diagnosed with myalgia encephalomyelitis and chronic fatigue syndrome, illustrating the hidden and stigmatising influences on occupation of living with these diagnoses through qualitative accounts and analysis.

Across these studies, there is evidence of depth and rigour in how methods are carefully selected to address specific research questions sensitively and comprehensively. In Stapleton *et al.* (2023), their scholarship of practice approach is clearly derived from occupational therapy thinking (Kielhofner, 2005) and resonates with principles of implementation science currently gaining traction across health-care research (Bauer and Kirchner, 2020) and particularly occupational therapy (Brown and Robinson, 2019) as a means to bridge the research–practice gap, illustrating the contribution occupational therapy can add to that challenge. From the articles in this edition of the IJOT, I take heart that the right methods are being used to address the important questions facing our profession, which take many different forms, illustrating that we are less concerned about “methods wars” of the past (Sale *et al.*, 2002), where one type of research was perceived as better than another, rather than methods can, and should, be complementary.

The current issue and full text archive of this journal is available on Emerald Insight at: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/2398-8819.htm>



Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy
51/2 (2023) 21
Emerald Publishing Limited [ISSN 2398-8819]
[DOI 10.1108/IJOT-11-2023-037]

I look forward to reviewing future work where occupational therapists ask the important questions for their area of practice and locality and are able to continue to competently address these evidence gaps by using nuanced and sophisticated methods appropriate to the range of issues facing our profession and communities.

Pauline Boland

*Faculty of Education and Health Sciences,
University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland;
Ageing Research Centre, Health Research Institute,
University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland and Health
Implementation Science and Technology Cluster,
University of Limerick, Limerick, Ireland*

References

- Bauer, M.S. and Kirchner, J. (2020), “Implementation science: what is it and why should I care?”, *Psychiatry Research*, Vol. 283, p. 112376, doi: [10.1016/j.psychres.2019.04.025](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2019.04.025).
- Brown, T. and Robinson, L. (2019), “Implementation science and AOTJ’s role in bridging the occupational therapy best practice–actual practice gap”, *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, Vol. 66 No. 2, pp. 127–129, doi: [10.1111/1440-1630.12576](https://doi.org/10.1111/1440-1630.12576).
- Davenport, S. and Underhill, A. (2023), “The use of outcome measures and factors affecting use in adult social care occupational therapy services in the UK”, *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy*, doi: [10.1108/IJOT-02-2023-0006](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOT-02-2023-0006).
- Gavin, L., O’Callaghan, L.-J. and Usher, R. (2023), “Knowledge and attitudes of undergraduate occupational therapy students towards older adults with dementia”, *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy*, doi: [10.1108/IJOT-06-2022-0022](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOT-06-2022-0022).
- Khalafbeigi, M., Yazdani, F., Genis, F., Hess, K.Y. and Kirve, S. (2023), “Invisibility and diagnosis stigma: disabling factors for female adults with myalgia encephalomyelitis (ME)/chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS) in a small-scale qualitative study in England”, *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy*, doi: [10.1108/IJOT-08-2022-0032](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOT-08-2022-0032).
- Kielhofner, G. (2005), “A scholarship of practice: creating discourse between theory, research and practice”, *Occupational Therapy in Health Care*, Vol. 19 Nos 1/2, pp. 7–16, doi: [10.1080/J003v19n01_02](https://doi.org/10.1080/J003v19n01_02).
- Sale, J.E., Lohfeld, L.H. and Brazil, K. (2002), “Revisiting the quantitative–qualitative debate: implications for mixed-methods research”, *Quality and Quantity*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 43–53, doi: [10.1023/A:1014301607592](https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014301607592), PMID: 26523073; PMCID: PMC462375.
- Stapleton, T., Jetter, K. and Commins, S. (2023), “Recommendations on developing an on-road fitness-to-drive route and test that incorporates an assessment for higher cognitive functioning”, *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy*, doi: [10.1108/IJOT-09-2022-0033](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOT-09-2022-0033).
- Yoo, I. (2023), “A scoping review of sleep management as an occupational therapy intervention: expanding a niche area of practice in mental health”, *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy*, doi: [10.1108/IJOT-01-2023-0001](https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOT-01-2023-0001).

© Pauline Boland. Published in *Irish Journal of Occupational Therapy*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode>