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<p>Occupational Therapy New Zealand Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa (OTNZ-WNA)</p> <p><b>Evidence Based Practice Position Statement</b></p>	 <p><b>OTNZ - WNA</b> Occupational Therapy New Zealand Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa</p>
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## Background

This position statement has been developed in consultation with occupational therapists and it reflects the current thinking of occupational therapists. It aims to communicate with key stakeholders (consumers, purchasers and other professions/agencies), the philosophy, key concepts, research needs, and key issues for occupational therapy evidence based practice.

The term ‘evidence-based medicine’ was coined at McMaster University medical school in the 1980s as a way of describing a process of problem-based clinical teaching” (Taylor, 2000, p. 1-2). A recent popular shift is the adoption of the terms evidence-based practice, or EBP, which has a broader conceptual base and applicability across a range of health professional groups.

This position statement is seen as developmental and dynamic and has a projected life span of two years.

## Philosophy- Evidence Based Practice

*“Evidence-based occupational therapy practice uses research evidence together with clinical knowledge and reasoning to make decisions about interventions that are effective for a specific client(s) (Law and Baum, 1998).*

OTNZ-WNA believes that all people are entitled to access evidence-based occupational therapy services.

OTNZ-WNA supports occupational therapy practice that is founded on good evidence decision making, and the notion that occupational therapy evidence-based practice (EBP) should inform all professional reasoning

OTNZ-WNA supports the international, interdisciplinary, movement towards evidence-based practice. This is a rigorous and transparent process for gathering and evaluating a range of practice and clinical evidence that informing practice decisions.

OTNZ-WNA believes occupational therapy evidence based practice will enable therapists to better target who receives services, articulate a clear basis for rationing and prioritising services, justify the need for resources, offer consumers sound choices, and establish reasonable starting points and limits to services.

## Context

OTNZ-WNA believes that sound professional reasoning is integral to occupational therapy evidence-based practice and therefore is informed by relevant legal, ethical, professional standards and current practice considerations, particularly the Treaty of Waitangi.

OTNZ-WNA believes that New Zealand occupational therapists see themselves as part of a global professional community and will use and contribute to international occupational therapy evidence-based practice. Within the contemporary health and disability context, service funders, purchasers, managers, consumers, health economists and professionals themselves, in response to the need to demonstrate competence, are all asking for evidence-based practice.

The need for occupational therapy evidence-based practice is clearly articulated in two key documents guiding practice in New Zealand.

- The Competencies for Registration specify that competent entry level practitioners will “use current theory, evidence and sound clinical reasoning to inform best occupational therapy practice” and “demonstrate an understanding of research processes and the interpretation of results” (Occupational Therapy Board, 2000).
- The Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists, section A 1.3 specifies that “Occupational therapists shall base their intervention and perform their duties on the basis of accurate and current information, working in partnership with the client to assist them to achieve their desired outcomes” (Occupational Therapy Board, 1998, p. 5).

## Key Concepts

Historically, health professionals based their decisions about what to do in addressing their client’s health and disability needs on accumulated professional wisdom, observations, and practice experience. With the philosophical shift towards the valuing of scientific knowledge, health professionals moved towards empirical research as the basis for professional decision-making.

Consistent with a growing consciousness within the international occupational therapy community, New Zealand occupational therapists acknowledge that the range and nature of evidence that they use in their practice may be different than used by other health professionals. The very nature of occupation involves an individual in some interaction(s) with their environment, and occupational therapy is a complex interplay between the person, their occupations and environment, and the therapy encounter. This complexity requires occupational therapists to seek and utilise evidence generated using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and methods as well as professional judgement which draws on the experience of the therapist. For this purpose the term “occupational therapy evidence-based practice” is the recommended term.

It is acknowledged that the research evidence that informs occupational therapy practice is emerging internationally.

## Research

OTNZ-WNA believes that occupational therapists in practice must primarily be critical consumers of research and that a growing number of New Zealand occupational therapists will engage in applied research over the next decade.

OTNZ-WNA will lead and support the development of occupational therapy evidence based practice in New Zealand by way of supporting activities in each of the key phases: developing practitioner EBP readiness; developing practitioner skills in gathering and evaluating the trustworthiness of evidence; disseminating research findings and evidence; and promoting practitioner engagement in applied research.

A set of techniques will be developed to assist OTNZ-WNA in this purpose and they will be used to guide the increasing use of OTEBP.

## Ongoing Education

OTNZ-WNA believes that all occupational therapists working in New Zealand should strive to ensure that their practice is evidence-based and that Health and Disability services support evidence-based practice, and that they should commit to working co-operatively to achieve this.

Position statements are statements on political, ethical, social, cultural and practise issues that influence client well-being, the role and practise of occupational therapy or that affect Occupational Therapy New Zealand Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa. They are frequently time limited and persons wishing to use them more than two years after publication should confirm their current status with the Executive Director of OTNZ-WNA.

## References

Hayes, R. L., & McGrath, J. J. (1998). Evidence-based practice: The Cochrane Collaboration, and occupational therapy. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 65, 144-151.

Law, M., & Baum, C. (1998). Evidence-based occupational therapy. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 65, 131-135.

Occupational Therapy Board. (2000). *Competencies for registration as an occupational therapist*. Wellington: Author.

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## Techniques recommended to encourage the Use of OTEBP in New Zealand

### Promote research and EBP readiness

- Establish governance of occupational therapy evidence-based practice under the Research and Education portfolio.
- Contribute funds annually to the Research and Education Trust fund.
- Fund and promote occupational therapy research that is consistent with the Government's Health, Primary Health Care, and Disability Strategies.
- Support research into the efficacy of occupational therapy practice and ways of working with clients.
- Offer continuing education workshops focused on further developing occupational therapists as critical consumers of forms of evidence and research (gathering evidence, evaluating evidence & applying research to practice) and making rigorous decisions in practice.
- OTNZ-WNA Conferences will promote occupational therapy evidence-based practice, by encouraging presentations founded on rigorous processes.
- Review current OTNZ-WNA documents and processes so that they are consistent with the development of occupational therapy evidence-based practice.
- Encourage OTNZ-WNA members to participate in the Australasian Cochrane Collaboration Group and the McMaster Occupational Therapy Evidence-based group.
- Actively promote changes in research priorities with research funders, based on socially and politically important practice areas, such as mental health rehabilitation.

### Gather and evaluate the trustworthiness of evidence

- Commission expert consensus forums on key, targeted areas linked to the Government's Health, Primary Health Care, and Disability Strategies, for example living with serious mental illness, the role of occupation in ameliorating the living problems of diabetes, the impact of unemployment on health, and occupationally based health promotion for the elderly
- Coordinate critical reviews of research.

### Disseminate knowledge

- Maintain a list of key reference people able to comment on occupational therapy evidence-based practice.
- Promote the OTNZ-WNA position on OTEBP.
- Train key reference people to disseminate occupational therapy evidence-based information through the NZ Journal of Occupational Therapy.
- Publish abstracts of all post-graduate dissertations and theses undertaken in New Zealand.
- Publish research conducted by New Zealand occupational therapists.