

POSITION STATEMENT

INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Introductory statement of purpose of paper

Participation in international occupational therapy research is part of the vision and strategic directions of the Education and Research (E&R) Program of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT). Accordingly this document sets out a framework and key actions for enhancing international collaborative research and research training across the world-wide occupational therapy community.

Statement of the position

The WFOT recognizes that fostering international research collaboration is crucial to assure the quality of occupational therapy practice and education worldwide and will take a facilitative role in identifying and seizing opportunities to promote international collaborative research activities. The WFOT is committed to advancing collaborative international occupational therapy research among member and associate member countries. The WFOT aims to support the development of an established research culture and practice within member countries in order to provide a robust and evolving evidence base for occupational therapy practice internationally.

Statement of the significance of the position to occupational therapy

Research is an essential component for the development and growth of occupational therapy worldwide. However, the degree of involvement with research activities by occupational therapists varies greatly among member countries. Barriers to occupational therapy research can include: lack of research training opportunities; a shortage of funding options and / or inaccessibility of funding; few experienced researchers to lead projects and mentor novice researchers; little time available for research activity; and lack of collaborative partners. International collaboration amongst occupational therapy researchers is essential for access to the world pool of knowledge and expertise and is indispensable for bringing different research perspectives to bear on key global and national occupational therapy issues. Experienced occupational therapy researchers can be facilitated to share their expertise to develop and contribute to international collaborative occupational therapy research activities and promote culturally appropriate and context specific occupational therapy research training and projects.

It is equally important that such collaboration assists in increasing human resources by developing graduates and scholars who have expertise in a range of research methodologies, are successful in accessing research funding and able to undertake occupational therapy specific research and contribute to multi-disciplinary / inter-agency research projects. Occupational Therapy researchers need to be internationally knowledgeable, culturally flexible and take into account, in their work, the increasing interdependent nature of occupational therapy research.

Substantiating rationale for the position

In a context of burgeoning opportunities and finite resources, the WFOT will need to adopt a framework that will guide the development of international collaborative occupational therapy research partnerships, activities and programs. This framework has to address issues related to: the internationalization of occupational therapy research; need for further coordinated effort for organizing and coordinating collaborative international occupational therapy research; and ensuring the availability of institutional and organizational support.

Strategies

To achieve the overall objective of this research strategy the WFOT will:

- Establish an International Advisory Group (IAG) comprised of experts in occupational therapy research, particularly in international collaborative research, to assist in developing a WFOT Master Plan for Research.
- Establish a program that will develop and integrate resources that will encourage collaborative international occupational therapy research and ensure that these are accessible to members.
- Promote the use of internet-based resources that would facilitate collaborative international occupational therapy research skills and abilities.
- In conjunction with the WFOT Congress as well as national and regional conferences, provide opportunities for the discussion and development of potential collaborative international occupational therapy research projects.
- Establish a mentorship program where novice occupational therapy researchers can be supported by experienced occupational therapy researchers.

Conclusion

The WFOT will ensure that international collaborative research will:

- take into account the diverse needs and approaches of the entire range of occupational therapy research.
- help build research capacities among novice researchers, particularly those in member countries where occupational therapy research is in the emergent stage.
- take into account the particular challenges of collaboration with researchers in countries where occupational therapy research is in its infancy.
- build upon existing research so that collaborative activities do not unnecessarily duplicate or overlap with activities already undertaken by members countries and other organizations.
- make a clear and significant contribution to the research issues at the heart of occupational therapy.
- be responsive to research policies and priorities at local and international levels to which occupational therapy can contribute
- meet ethical guidelines for research conducted with human and non-human subjects of member countries.