

How to Use and Build the Evidence Base for Occupational Therapy



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Introduction

- Thank you for taking an interest in learning more about how to use and build the evidence base for Occupational Therapy
- This information has been split into 8 different topics so that you can access it in bite sized chunks
- You can also navigate the content in any order so that you can learn about topics that spark an interest for you!



The journey ahead...

- From first steps, to climbing a mountain, this guide to using and building the evidence has been designed with everyone in mind, regardless of where you are starting your journey from!
- Click on the areas that are of interest to you to get started!



Content



The concept and value of evidence informed practice



Meeting our professional responsibilities around using evidence in practice



What do we mean by "evidence" and where do I find it?



Research priorities within Occupational Therapy



Building the evidence base



Potential challenges to using and building the evidence base



Useful resources and future learning



Actions to use and further build the evidence base

The concept and
value of evidence
informed practice



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Evidence-Based or Evidence
Informed? What does it mean and
how will it benefit my practice?



What is it and where did it originate?

- Evidenced-Based Practice (EBP) originated in the **1980's within medicine** with calls for occupational therapists to use research to support their practice for over 35yrs - in a bid to enhance our professional identity and status (Ottenbacher, 1987)
- Originally described as the **conscientious and explicit use of research evidence** to support clinical judgements (Bennett and Bennett, 2000)
- Now the term evidence-based is applicable across healthcare professions to inform **decision making, defend practice** and provide **clear rationale** for actions taken with patients / service users (Aveyard et al., 2023)

Evidence Informed Practice

- Is **informed** and **influenced** by:
- The best research evidence
- Clinical expertise and experience
- The nature and philosophy of the practice context
- Client values and circumstances
- Reflective thinking
- Professional reasoning
- **Together this helps to deliver a person-centered approach!**

(Krueger *et al.*, 2020; Plastow and Bryant, 2023)

Why is it important to use evidence within our practice?

To inform our decision making / judgements

To ensure patient safety and quality

To give client choice and build trust

To help us communicate with other professionals

To ensure accountability

To be cost effective

To demonstrate our value

To strengthen our professional identity and credibility

(Holm, 2000; Salls et al., 2009; Bannigan, 2014; COT, 2015; Hoffmann et al., 2017; Rice et al., 2019; RCOT, 2021; Glasdam et al., 2022)

Meeting our
professional
responsibilities
around using
evidence in
practice



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What do our Professional Standards say?

RCOT (2021) Professional standards for
occupational therapy practice, conduct and ethics

HCPC (2023) Standards of proficiency for
occupational therapists



RCOT (2021)

- **4.2 Your professional rationale**
- 4.2.1 Your actions are based on a set of logical professional reasons, which are themselves informed by professional knowledge, skills and experience, and **published resources**
- 4.2.1.2 You use **national guidelines, current policy, research** and **best available evidence** to underpin and inform your reasoning, rationale and practice

RCOT (2021)

- **4.7 Developing and using the profession's evidence base**
- 4.7.2 You reflect on the value and importance of research as the foundation of **the profession's evidence base**
- 4.7.3 You access, understand and critically evaluate research and its outcomes, incorporating it into your practice where appropriate to **provide evidence informed interventions**
- 4.7.4 You incorporate evidence-based outcome measures and research activity into your practice, to **demonstrate the effectiveness of intervention** and services

HCPC (2023)

- At the point of registration, occupational therapists must be able to:
- **11 Assure the quality of their practice**
- 11.1 engage in **evidence-based** practice

- **13 Draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice**
- 13.9 recognise the **value of research** to the critical evaluation of practice
- 13.10 **critically evaluate** research and other evidence to inform their own practice



Stop and reflect!

- Do you currently use evidence to inform your practice?
- How do you ensure that your interventions are the most appropriate?
- How do you ensure that your practice is safe and of the highest quality?
- What evidence could you use to demonstrate cost effectiveness?

What do we
mean by
“evidence”
and where do I
find it?



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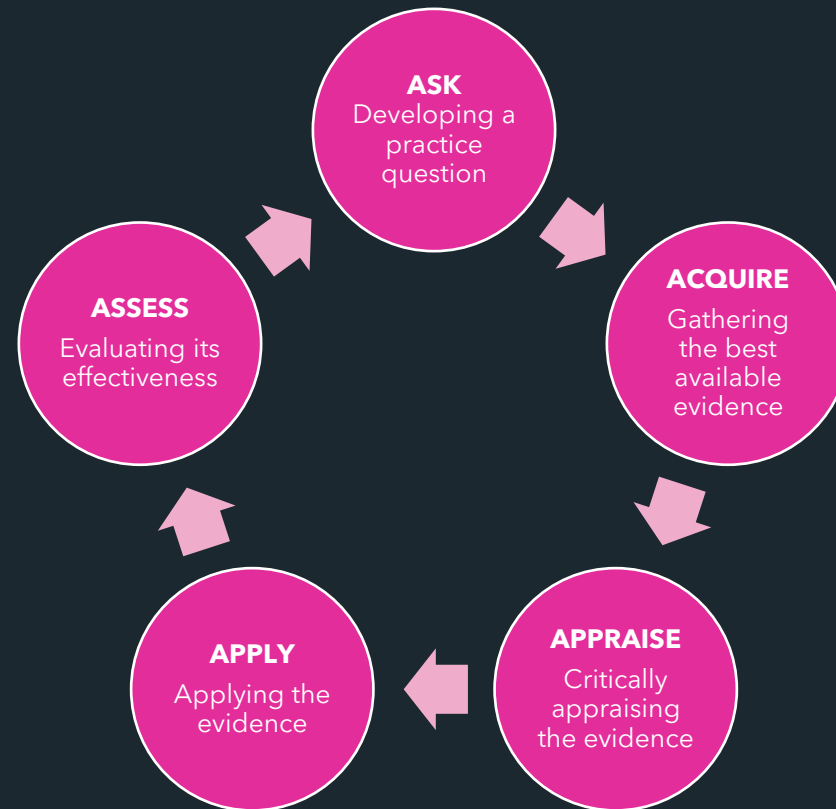


What is classed as “evidence”

- **Research studies** – typically published in peer reviewed journals
- **Publications** – textbooks, manuals, checklists, statistics, reports
- **Guidance** – e.g. RCOT, WFOT, NICE, WHO, HCPC, NIHR, Health & Social Care bodies etc
- **Statistics** - e.g. Office for National Statistics, Gov.uk
- **Professional opinion** – e.g. opinion pieces, consultations, committee reports, position statements, lectures, conference presentations
- **Lived experience** – research and narratives focussed on service user and carer perspectives

(Brown, 2023)

The 5-step process of applying evidence to practice



(Sackett, 1997)



Where to find the evidence



Where and what do I search?

- **Databases** and **library searches**
- Using **search strategies** - key words, limiters and Boolean operators
- **Different types of research** evidence such as systematic reviews, randomised control trials, case studies, mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative research





Respecting different contributions to the evidence base

- Humans are never impartial; and as such we bring our own values, experiences and knowledge as researchers, often studying a field we are already passionate about (Nayar and Stanley, 2024)
- To criticize qualitative research for not having the same qualities of quantitative studies is like...**“comparing cars with horses and criticizing horses for not having somewhere to put a suitcase.”** Jolley (2020)



Getting Started with finding evidence...

Does your organisation have a library?

Have you been in and spoken to the librarian(s)?

Do they offer any workshops or one to one support in accessing the evidence base?

Are you a member of RCOT? Have you accessed the digital library via their website?

If you work for the NHS - do you have an OpenAthens account?

If you are studying, what does your University offer to further develop your literature searching skills?

Useful websites to find evidence other than research

- [Practice resources - RCOT](#)
- [Resources | WFOT](#)
- [Published guidance, NICE advice and quality standards | Guidance | NICE](#)
- [About Us | NIHR Evidence](#)
- [Publications, reports, long reads and articles | The King's Fund \(kingsfund.org.uk\)](#)
- [NHS England » Publication Containers](#)
- [Guidance and regulation - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)
- [Home - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

Research priorities within Occupational Therapy



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Why is it important to understand about research priorities?

It sets a clear research agenda for the profession

It ensures that time, effort and funding is centred on issues that matter the most to those who access and deliver Occupational Therapy services

It helps develop a healthy and proactive research culture

It enables research collaborations and centres to develop specialist knowledge

RCOT funding is focused on supporting research that addresses these priorities



RCOT Research Priorities

The top 10

- 1 How does occupational therapy make a difference and have impact on everyday lives?
- 2 How can occupational therapists ensure that person-centred practice is central to how they work?
- 3 How can occupational therapists work more effectively with the family and carers of people who access services?
- 4 What are the long-term benefits of occupational therapy intervention?
- 5 What are the benefits or impact of occupational therapy in primary care settings? (e.g. services delivered by your local general practice surgery, community pharmacy, dental and optometry (eye health) services)
- 6 How can occupational therapy services be more inclusive of both mental and physical health?
- 7 What is the role of occupational therapy in supporting self-management? (e.g. helping people with illness to manage their health on a day-to-day basis)
- 8 What is the role or impact of occupational therapy in reducing hospital admissions?
- 9 How can occupational therapists work most effectively with other professionals to improve outcomes for people who access services? (e.g. multi-disciplinary teams, commissioners, community agencies)
- 10 What is the cost-effectiveness of occupational therapy services?

(RCOT, 2019)



WFOT Research Priorities



Effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions



Evidence-based practice and knowledge translation



Participation in everyday life



Healthy Ageing



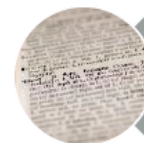
Occupational therapy and chronic conditions



Sustainable community development and population-based interventions



Technology and occupational therapy



Occupational therapy professional issues

(WFOT, 2016)

Building the evidence base



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What could be my role in building the evidence base?

Re-post ethically approved research adverts on social media

Be a research participant

Set up a journal club within your organisation

Write down potential research questions

Share research ideas with your local University OT programmes

Share best practice with colleagues

Think creatively about dissemination

Join a network, forum or online community

Carry out an audit or service development project and share your findings

Apply for small grants and innovation funding



What could be my role in building the evidence base?



Signpost others to research opportunities, events, training and funding



Become a gatekeeper for a study



Respond to consultations on the development of guidelines or standards



Follow experienced researchers on social media



Find out more about your organisation's research department



Understand about the ethical requirements of designing and carrying out a research study



Attend research conferences, present your research and network!



Collaborate with existing researchers



What could be my role in building the evidence base?

| | |
|-------------|---|
| Start | Start small and build up your confidence of different aspects of the research process |
| Assist | Assist with a literature review |
| Apply | Apply for career development funding to develop your research skills |
| Be Involved | Be involved in data collection |
| Learn | Learn about co-production |
| Support | Support patients, service users and carers to engage in research |
| Offer | Offer to mentor less experienced researchers |
| Complete | Complete an MSc, MRes or PhD! |
| Become | Become a research supervisor |
| Join | Join conference committees, advisory boards, R&D boards, journal editorial boards etc. |
| Apply | Apply for grants and funding to support larger scale studies and wide scale dissemination |

Potential
challenges to using
and building the
evidence base



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Challenges to using and building the evidence base



Lack of time to search for evidence (Thomas et al., 2021)



Lack of knowledge, skills and confidence (Buchanan et al., 2016)



Applying for grants and funding can be time consuming



Occupational therapy interventions are often difficult to measure (Nayar and Stanley, 2024)



Refining research ideas given the complexity of practice (Gustafsson et al., 2014; Pentland et al., 2018)



Funding and time for dissemination of research



Education and training around development of research skills can be costly and often requires a big commitment

Useful resources
and future
learning



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Useful Textbooks

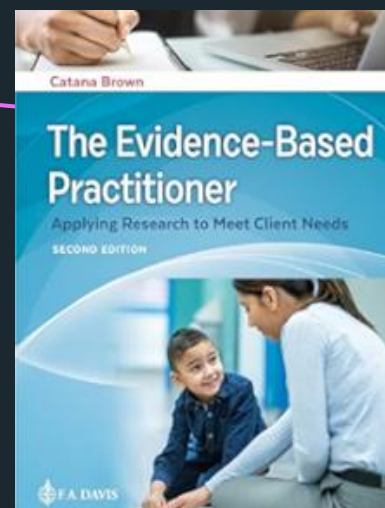
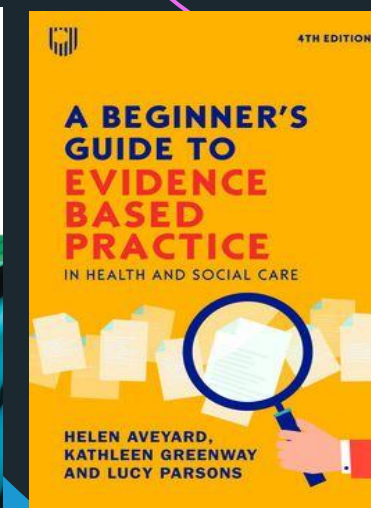
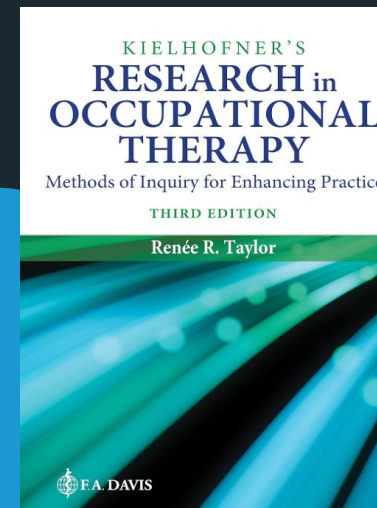
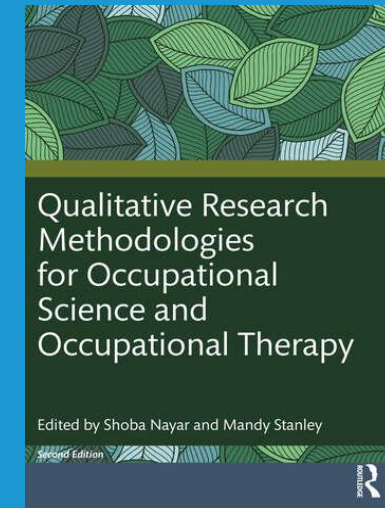
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Brown, C. (2023) *The evidence-based practitioner: Applying research to meet client needs*. 2nd edn. F.A. Davis.

Nayar, S. and Stanley, M. (2024) *Qualitative research methodologies for occupational science and occupational therapy*. 2nd edn. Routledge.

Rice, M., Stein, F. and Tomlin, G. (2019) *Clinical research in occupational therapy*. 6th edn. Routledge.

Taylor, R. (2023) *Kielhofner's research in occupational therapy: Methods of inquiry for enhancing practice*. 3rd edn. F.A Davis.





What additional learning could you undertake to develop your skills in using the evidence?



Understanding the research hierarchy



Exploring the top 10 research priorities in Occupational Therapy



Searching for credible sources



Developing critical appraisal skills



Applying standards, guidelines, policies etc to your work



Learning how to reference



Learning from lived experience

Research Events and Training

Elizabeth Casson Trust (ECT): Funding calls for research, conferences and PhD support (as well as free mentoring and leadership programmes for OT's). You can follow them on social media too [About Us - Elizabeth Casson Trust](#)

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT): If you're a member you should get regular updates from the R&D team (with lots of useful info re: funding calls, training etc) but if you don't think you are receiving them through just drop them an email: RDBulletin@rcot.co.uk You can also check out the research area on the website (exclusive content for members only)

National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR): NIHR ARC - Applied Research Collaborations (national newsletter) - sign up here [NIHR ARCs](#) They also have regional ARC's, priority areas (which might align with your clinical interests) and a seminar series too - why not have a scroll through their website when you have a spare 10mins [Applied Research Collaborations | NIHR](#) General research training and funding opportunities can be found via the main webpage [Homepage | NIHR](#)

Community for Allied Health Professions Research (CAHPR): [Home Page - CAHPR](#) Lots of free webinars, conversation cafes, and a list of AHP professors which is useful to know! They also have regional hubs - sign up to a hub mailing list to receive updates about research activities and events [Hubs Archive - CAHPR](#)



Hints and tips from fellow occupational therapists...

Network and find people who can support and guide you

*Give things a go!
Don't be afraid to not get it right the first time*

Connect with other Occupational Therapists who are interested in research

Take every opportunity and be brave and have courage in your ability

Reflect on where you want to be

Using AI to find evidence – helpful or harmful???



Using a generative AI tool such as Co-pilot or ChatGPT:
Type into the search bar “occupational therapy and...” - an area of practice e.g. mental health, paediatrics, stroke etc.

What does it find?

How do you know if this is reliable and credible evidence?

Actions to use
and further build
the evidence base



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Where are you at and where would you like to be?



First steps – read OTNews, listen to a podcast, read an autobiography, sign up to a CAHPR hub newsletter



A walk in the park – chat to students on placement about their research study or something they have read recently, read a journal article



A social walk – chat about an article with a colleague, set up a journal club at work, take part in a research study as a participant



A power walk – sign up to a writing retreat, engage in “shut up and write” sessions, attend further training via short courses or events



Hiking a new trail – present at conference, write an article, join a research forum or specialist interest group or online community



Climbing a mountain – sign up for an MSc, MRes or PhD! Apply for research funding and grants, join advisory committees and boards



What ONE action
will you take to **use**
the evidence base?

What ONE action
will you take to
build the evidence
base?



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