

Research Opportunities in the Area of Adults With Serious Mental Illness

MeSH TERMS

- evidence-based practice
- mental disorders
- occupational therapy
- research

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Evidence-Based Practice Project has developed a table summarizing the research opportunities on adults with serious mental illness. The table provides an overview of the state of current available evidence on interventions within the scope of occupational therapy practice and is based on the systematic reviews from AOTA's Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines Series. Researchers, students, and clinicians can use this information in developing innovative research to answer important questions within the occupational therapy field.

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Planning a research project requires consideration of many factors. Level of interest and knowledge in a specific area, access to appropriate populations of participants, support of mentors and other researchers, and funding availability all help determine the focus of a future project. An additional component to be considered is whether adequate, up-to-date research has already been completed on a topic; if sufficient evidence is available in a given core area, this area might not be the best choice for another research project.

The best research topic may be one in which either little research has been done or the research to date is insufficient, inconclusive, or mixed. In addition, when research conducted to date provides a low level of evidence and is of limited quality, additional high-quality research in the area is needed.

The “Research Opportunities Table on Adults With Serious Mental Illness” provides an overview of the state of current available evidence on interventions within the scope of occupational therapy practice. The table is based on the systematic reviews from the Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines Series developed by the American Occupational Therapy Association Evidence-Based Practice Project. The table lists specific interventions and indicates either that the evidence is sufficient to support the intervention or that moderate, mixed, or few studies support the intervention and therefore it is a priority research area. Please refer to the *Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines for Adults With Serious Mental Illness* (Brown, 2012) and the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* Special Issue on the Effectiveness of Occupational Therapy Services in Mental Health Practice (Gutman, 2011) for more information on the topic area and the systematic review process.

This table also is posted online for researchers to use to inform the occupational therapy community about their work. The table is linked to Google Drive and offers a place for researchers to include information on recently completed and ongoing research. It is hoped that this information will make the research planning process easier, minimize duplication of research efforts, and stimulate discussions among researchers with similar interests, which can then facilitate the creation of research networks and multisite studies. Researchers, students, and clinicians can use this information in developing innovative research to answer important questions within the occupational therapy field. To add current or ongoing research to the table, visit <http://www.aota.org/researchopportunitiesables>.

Research Opportunities Table on Adults With Serious Mental Illness

| Theme | Specific Intervention | Strength of Evidence |
|---|--|------------------------|
| | Areas of Occupation | |
| Work | Supported employment or Individual Placement and Support (IPS) programs to improve work placement in competitive employment and other vocational outcomes, particularly programs with high fidelity to the IPS model | Research sufficient |
| | Supported employment programs to improve nonvocational outcomes | Priority research area |
| Education | Supported education programs to meet postsecondary education goals | Priority research area |
| Social participation | Life and social skills training, with extended training in natural environments | Priority research area |
| | Ability to generalize life and social skills training from one environment or one skill area to another | Priority research area |
| Instrumental activities of daily living | Skills training plus health care management | Priority research area |
| | Grocery shopping group to improve grocery shopping skills | Priority research area |
| | Parenting skills program | Priority research area |
| | Lifestyle interventions to improve health behaviors related to obesity and metabolic syndrome | Research sufficient |
| | Physical activity, exercise, and outdoor activities to improve symptoms of depression and anxiety | Priority research area |
| | Money management training | Priority research area |
| | Performance Skills | |
| Cognitive skills | Cognitive remediation to improve life skills tied to real-life practice | Priority research area |
| | Cognitive skills training in conjunction with supported employment | Priority research area |
| | Social cognition and problem-solving training | Priority research area |
| | Cognitive training to improve cognitive skills | Priority research area |
| | Cognitive remediation to improve life skills without real-life practice | Priority research area |
| Emotional regulation skills | Emotional regulation and social skills training in conjunction with supported employment | Priority research area |
| | Activity group to improve social interaction skills | Priority research area |
| | Stress management in conjunction with a job program | Priority research area |
| | Performance Patterns | |
| Routines | Interpersonal and social rhythm therapy to establish and maintain routines for people with bipolar disorder | Priority research area |
| Roles | Client-centered role development program for the development of task and interpersonal skills within social roles | Priority research area |
| Context and environment | Environmental supports to improve adaptive functioning | Research sufficient |
| | Cooking skills training in both clinic and home environment | Priority research area |
| | In-home employment program to prepare for community-based employment | Priority research area |
| Activity demands | Use of a work behavior inventory to provide work-related feedback in combination with supported employment | Priority research area |

Researchers are also encouraged to enter their projects into AOTA's Researcher Database at <http://myaota.aota.org/research/>. This database provides AOTA with information such as relevant clinical settings and populations, *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* level (World Health Organization, 2001), funder (if any), and key words to help guide research advocacy and policy initiatives. ▲

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Special Issue on the Effectiveness of Occupational Therapy Services in Mental Health Practice (Gutman, 2011) and the *Occupational Therapy Practice Guidelines for Adults With Serious Mental Illness* (Brown, 2012), all from the AOTA Evidence-Based Practice Project.

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