State of the Journal, 2013

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Over the past decade, the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* has developed into a solid research journal, increasingly disseminating evidence-based research able to inform practice. The growth in the journal's scientific rigor has mirrored the profession's developmental evolution as an increasing number of occupational therapy researchers have attained doctoral research degrees and funding for occupational therapy research. The year 2013 marked the 4th successive year in which the journal received more than 200 submissions and the 6th year in which more than 85 articles were published (Table 1).

Practice Areas

In the past 6 years, two practice areas—(1) rehabilitation, disability, and participation and (2) children and youth—have been the primary practice areas addressed in studies published in *AJOT* (Table 2). This research trend mirrors practice trends (AOTA, 2009) and has provided empirical support for traditional and innovative interventions in these specialty areas.

In the past 4 years, researchers have increasingly answered the call to generate empirical evidence for occupational therapy in the area of productive aging, and increasing numbers of studies have been published in *AJOT* addressing this specialty area (see Table 2). For the May/June 2013 issue, Sue Berger guest edited a special issue, sponsored by the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Evidence-Based Practice Project, on the effectiveness of occupational therapy intervention for older adults with low vision. An additional 13 studies were published in other 2013 issues and addressed evaluation and practice research questions in the practice area of productive aging.

For the July/August 2013 issue, Jane Case-Smith guest edited a special issue on the effectiveness of occupational therapy in early intervention and early childhood, also sponsored by the AOTA Evidence-Based Practice Project. An additional 22 studies published in other issues addressed pediatric evaluation and practice research questions.

Although much-needed research in the practice area of mental health has not significantly increased in the past 6 years, a greater percentage of studies addressed mental health evaluation and practice in 2013 than in other years ($n = 8$, 11%; see Table 2). The one exception to the low number of published research studies addressing occupational therapy practice in mental health was 2011, in which a special issue was devoted to this topic. As the profession fights to regain standing in this practice area, researchers must generate empirical support for occupational therapy with traditional and nontraditional populations.

Research Type

The *Centennial Vision* (AOTA, 2007) calls for the profession to become evidence based, and *AJOT* and occupational therapy researchers have consistently begun to answer this mandate. AOTA uses standards of evidence modeled on those developed in evidence-based medicine (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002). This approach standardizes and ranks the value of scientific evidence using the following grading system (Sackett, Rosenberg, Muir Gray, Haynes, & Richardson, 1996):

- *Level I:* Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials
- *Level II:* Two groups, nonrandomized studies (e.g., cohort, case control)

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Table 1. *AJOT* Acceptance Rate and Total Publications, 2008–2013

Submissions	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008
Total submissions	201	234	204	239	192	—
Accepted, *n* (%)	70 (35)	92 (39)	72 (35)	79 (33)	84 (44)	—
Rejected, *n* (%)	131 (65)	142 (61)	132 (65)	160 (67)	108 (56)	—
Total no. of published articles	87	90	86	92	70	61
No. of published research studies	71	80	75	82	62	58

Note. AJOT = American Journal of Occupational Therapy; — = not available.

- *Level III:* One group, nonrandomized (e.g., before and after, pretest and posttest)
- *Level IV:* Descriptive studies that include analysis of outcomes (e.g., single-subject design, case series)
- *Level V:* Case reports and expert opinion that include narrative literature reviews and consensus statements.

The year 2013 marked the fourth successive year in which intervention effectiveness studies were published in greater number than any other research type (see Table 2); 2013 also marked the fourth successive year in which more Level I studies were published than any other evidence level (evidence levels are based on the AOTA Evidence-Based Practice Project's model). Of the past 6 years, 2013 was the first in which the percentage of Level II studies was second only to those at Level I. These advancements suggest that the profession is increasingly producing research with higher levels of rigor. With the profession's centennial anniversary 4 years away, we can assuredly state that although growth is still warranted, occupational therapy researchers are increasingly answering the call to produce evidence-based research with high levels of rigor that can inform practice (see Table 3).

Research Funding

In the past 5 years, *AJOT* authors have consistently received funding from the National Institutes of Health, other U.S. federal agencies, and U.S. foundations (Table 4). Many international occupational therapy researchers published in *AJOT* also received funding. Just fewer than half of all studies published in *AJOT* in the past 5 years received government or foundation funding, suggesting that occupational therapy researchers are pursuing research that holds significance for the welfare and health of society's members. The profession is producing talented researchers who have the skills to secure funding, and funders are increasingly aware that the ability to participate in desired daily activities despite disease, disability, or injury is of paramount importance to society, with regard to both personal quality of life and the broader economy.

Impact Factor

The year 2012 also saw a continued increase in the journal's impact factor (IF)—the

Table 2. Practice Area, Research Type, and Level of Evidence of *AJOT* Articles, 2008–2013

	2013 (*N* = 71)		2012 (*N* = 80)		2011 (*N* = 75)		2010 (*N* = 82)		2009 (*N* = 62)		2008 (*N* = 58)	
Category	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Practice area												
Rehabilitation, disability, and participation	16	23	25	31	20	27	31	38	25	40	13	22
Children and youth	28	39	33	41	22	29	26	32	18	29	22	38
Productive aging	14	20	16	20	12	16	19	23	4	6	9	16
Mental health	8	11	3	4	11	15	2	2	4	6	0	0
Work and industry	1	1	0	0	6	8	0	0	0	0	1	2
Health and wellness	0	0	1	1	2	3	1	1	6	10	1	2
No specific practice area	4	6	2	3	2	3	3	4	5	8	12	21
Research type												
Effectiveness	26	37	32	40	36	48	25	30	14	23	19	33
Instrument development and testing	18	25	24	30	13	17	23	28	13	21	15	26
Basic	11	15	14	18	16	21	17	21	26	42	13	22
Efficiency	8	11	4	5	4	5	10	12	5	8	0	0
Topical or professional question	6	8	3	4	4	5	3	4	2	3	10	17
Occupation, participation, and health	1	1	0	0	1	1	4	5	2	3	1	2
Education	1	1	3	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Level of evidence (effectiveness studies)												
I	15	58	18	56	21	58	12	48	1	7	7	37
II	4	15	2	6	2	6	3	12	7	50	1	5
III	4	15	5	16	8	22	1	4	2	14	4	21
IV	0	0	4	13	4	11	5	20	2	14	1	5
V	3	12	3	9	1	3	4	16	2	14	6	32

Note. AJOT = American Journal of Occupational Therapy.

Table 3. 2013 *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* Research Articles by Practice Area, Research Type, and Level of Evidence

Author	Effectiveness Study/ Level of Evidence	Efficiency Study	Basic Research	Instrument Development and Testing	Link Between Occupational Engagement and Health	Professional Issue	Education	Practice Area
Ajzenman, Standeven, & Shurtleff	•/III							Children and youth
Arbesman, Bazyk, & Nochajski	•/I							Mental health
Arbesman, Lieberman, & Berlanstein (2013a)	•/I							Children and youth
Arbesman, Lieberman, & Berlanstein (2013b)	•/I							Productive aging
Bellefeuille, Schaaf, & Polo	•/V							Children and youth
Bellows, Davies, Anderson, & Kennedy	•/I							Children and youth
Bennett, Hoffmann, McCluskey, Coghlan, & Tooth						•		No specific practice area
Berger, McAteer, Schreier, & Kaldenberg	•/I							Productive aging
Case-Smith	•/I							Children and youth
Case-Smith, Frolek Clark, & Schlabach	•/I							Children and youth
Chang, Ailey, Heller, & Chen				•				Mental health
Chang, Helfrich, & Coster				•				Mental health
Ciro, Hershey, & Garrison	•/V							Rehabilitation
Classen, Monahan, & Wang			•					Children and youth
Classen, Wang, Crizzle, Winter, & Lanford				•				Productive aging
Classen, Wang, Winter, et al.				•				Productive aging
Cramm, Krupa, Missiuna, Lysaght, & Parker						•		Children and youth
Crepeau & Wilson						•		No specific practice area
Darragh et al.		•						Rehabilitation
Dickerson				•				Productive aging
Dinglas et al.		•						Rehabilitation
Dunn & Gardner			•					Children and youth
Duval-White, Jirikowic, Rios, Deitz, & Olson			•					Children and youth
Eriksson, Baum, Wolf, & Connor					•			Rehabilitation
Fingerhut				•				Children and youth
Fingerhut et al.		•						Children and youth
Frolek Clark & Schlabach	•/I							Children and youth
Gal, Ben Meir, & Katz				•				Work and industry
Gantschnig, Page, Nilsson, & Fisher				•				Children and youth
Graham, Rodger, & Ziviani	•/III							Children and youth
Hall et al.	•/I							Rehabilitation
Harley & Schwartz						•		Mental health
Howe, Roston, Sheu, & Hinojosa	•/II							Children and youth
Howe & Wang	•/I							Children and youth
Huang et al.			•					Rehabilitation
Hwang				•				Productive aging
Jongbloed-Pereboom, Nijhuis-van der Sanden, & Steenbergen				•				Children and youth

(*Continued*)

Table 3. 2013 *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* Research Articles by Practice Area, Research Type, and Level of Evidence (*cont.*)

Author	Effectiveness Study/ Level of Evidence	Efficiency Study	Basic Research	Instrument Development and Testing	Link Between Occupational Engagement and Health	Professional Issue	Education	Practice Area
Justiss	•/I							Productive aging
King				•				Rehabilitation
Kingsley & Mailloux	•/I							Children and youth
Kratz, Schepens, & Murphy			•					Productive aging
Lannin, Cusick, McLachlan, & Allaous			•					Rehabilitation
Liu, Brost, Horton, Kenyon, & Mears	•/I							Productive aging
Lysack, Leach, Russo, Paulson, & Lichtenberg						•		Productive aging
Morrison et al.				•				Rehabilitation
Mortenson, Hurd Clarke, & Best		•						Productive aging
Mouradian, DeGrace, & Thompson	•/III							Mental health
Mulcahey et al.				•				Children and youth
Ohl et al.	•/II							Children and youth
Ownsworth et al.				•				Rehabilitation
Peloquin & Ciro (2013a)		•						Mental health
Peloquin & Ciro (2013b)		•						Mental health
Perlmutter et al.				•				Productive aging
Plach & Sells			•					Mental health
Pociask, DiZazzo-Miller, & Samuel							•	No specific practice area
Potvin, Snider, Prelock, Kehayia, & Wood-Dauphinee				•				Children and youth
Roll, Evans, Li, Sommerich, & Case-Smith			•					Rehabilitation
Rowe				•				Rehabilitation
Rowe, Yuen, & Dure	•/III							Children and youth
Sanders & Van Oss			•					Productive aging
Schwellnus et al.			•					Children and youth
Smallfield, Clem, & Myers	•/I							Productive aging
Thomas & Law						•		No specific practice area
Toglia & Berg				•				Children and youth
Tsai, Meng, Wu, Jang, & Su	•/V							Children and youth
Tsai et al.	•/II							Rehabilitation
Weaver, Page, Sheffler, & Chae			•					Rehabilitation
Wu, Hung, Tseng, & Huang	•/II							Children and youth
Wu, Wang, et al.	•/I							Rehabilitation
Yonkman, Lawler, Talty, O'Neil, & Bull		•						Children and youth
Yuen et al.		•						Rehabilitation
Total	**26**	**8**	**11**	**18**	**1**	**6**	**1**	**Total = 71**

Table 4. Funding of *AJOT* Research Articles, 2009–2013

	2013 (*N* = 71)		2012 (*N* = 80)		2011 (*N* = 75)		2010 (*N* = 82)		2009 (*N* = 62)	
Funding Source	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
National Institutes of Health	6	19	12	29	11	33	6	16	5	17
Other federal agency	3	9	9	22	4	12	2	5	6	20
U.S. state agency	2	6	0	0	0	0	1	3	1	3.
U.S. foundation	6	19	10	24	10	30.	4	11	7	23
U.S. university funding	4	12	3	7	0	0	4	11	12	40
U.S. doctoral scholarship	2	6	0	0	2	6.	0	0	2	7
International funding source	9	28	7	17	10	30	20	54	5	17
Total funded articles	32	45	41	51	33	44	37	45	30	48

Note. Some studies received funding from multiple sources. *AJOT* = *American Journal of Occupational Therapy.*

score compiled by *Journal Citation Reports* (*JCR*) that reflects the number of times a journal is cited in 2- and 5-yr time periods (Table 5). *AJOT* is now ranked as the Number 19 journal (of 66) in the Social Science Division of *JCR*. The steady increase in *AJOT*'s IF in the past 4 years reflects the enhanced level and rigor of published research studies. In future years, *AJOT*'s IF will also likely be influenced by the recent indexing of several major occupational therapy journals in *JCR*. When *AJOT* publications are cited in other occupational therapy journals indexed in *JCR, AJOT*'s IF increases. Thus, the addition of other occupational therapy journals to *JCR* promotes the entire profession and provides acknowledgment for all occupational therapy research.

Future Goals

In the past 6 years, *AJOT* has achieved considerable advancements:

Table 5. *AJOT* Impact Factor Scores, 1999–2012

Year	2-Yr IF	5-Yr IF
2012	1.471	2.021
2011	1.697	2.009
2010	1.672	1.806
2009	1.419	1.408
2008	0.921	1.184
2007	0.673	0.971
2006	0.713	—
2005	0.634	—
2004	0.676	—
2003	0.610	—
2002	0.550	—
2001	0.674	—
2000	0.770	—
1999	0.473	—

Note. AJOT = *American Journal of Occupational Therapy;* IF = impact factor; — = not available before 2007.

- The journal is now ranked as Number 19 in the Social Science Division of *JCR,* and the IF has steadily increased.
- The number of published research studies with high levels of rigor has consistently increased.
- The number of published intervention effectiveness studies has consistently increased and has begun to provide a foundation of support for occupational therapy services.
- The call for more research in the area of productive aging has been addressed, as demonstrated by the increased number of publications in this practice area.
- The number of published articles per volume has increased, promoting the dissemination of occupational therapy research.

To maintain and further advance these accomplishments, the following goals will be continued:

- The journal's current publication goals as stated in the "Guidelines for Contributors to *AJOT*" will be maintained.
- Efforts to monitor and increase the IF will continue.
- Special issues will continue to be developed to address gaps in the profession's evidence base. ▲

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