

State of the Journal, 2016

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MeSH TERMS

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- occupational therapy
- periodicals as topic
- quality improvement
- research



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The *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* had a successful 2016. From September 2015 to September 2016, the number of manuscripts submitted remained steady at 255. Manuscripts were received from 30 non-U.S. countries, compared with 23 countries in 2015. *AJOT* continues to have the highest impact factor and to be the highest ranked of the occupational therapy journals listed in *Journal Citation Reports*. *AJOT* continues to focus on publishing research articles on aspects of occupational therapy among varied populations with diverse acute and chronic conditions. Changes in 2016 include requiring authors to register clinical trials at public trial registration sites and welcoming new associate editors and reviewers to the *AJOT* family.

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This year, the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* experienced an important increase in prestige: For 2015, the journal obtained a 5-year impact factor of 2.113 and a 2-year impact factor of 1.806, the highest ever! *AJOT* remains the most highly ranked occupational therapy journal according to the 2016 *Journal Citation Reports (JCR)*, moving up in rank from 22nd to 10th of 71 journals indexed in the Social Science Division's Rehabilitation subsection on the basis of the 2-year impact factor.

The Editorial Board saw some changes this year. Marjorie Scaffa joined the board as associate editor for education manuscripts, replacing Janice Burke, and Mariana d'Amico and Barbara Doucet completed their terms in June. We are extremely appreciative of everyone's efforts on the Editorial Board, and we are happy to announce that Dr. d'Amico and Dr. Doucet will continue with *AJOT* as reviewers. We welcomed Karen Jacobs and Linda Shriber to the board as associate editors in July.

2016 Article and Readership Statistics

Table 1 shows manuscript statistics for 2016 compared with the previous 5 years. As of September 2016, 255 manuscripts had been submitted to the journal this calendar year, 76 of which (29.8%) were

accepted for publication in either 2016 or 2017 issues. International manuscript submissions have increased: Manuscripts have been received from 30 countries other than the United States, compared with 23 non-U.S. countries in 2015.

Readership of *AJOT* has also increased; for example, for the month of August 2016, *AJOT* articles were viewed online 13,983 times, with 9,795 pdf downloads, for a total of 23,778 views; in comparison, in August 2015, articles were viewed 8,841 with 6,957 pdf downloads, for a total of 15,798 views. Between January and August 2016 (this writing), *AJOT* articles were viewed online 151,881 times, with 110,239 pdf downloads. Most users of the *AJOT* website are from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, although many other countries are represented. Readership of *AJOT* has also seen international growth, demonstrating that *AJOT* is truly a global publication.

Because *AJOT*'s mission is to be a primary source for dissemination of evidence to support occupational therapy practice, the journal continues to publish primarily research articles. The types of research articles published to date compared with 2015 are provided in Table 2. As in 2015, articles are categorized as follows:

- *Effectiveness studies*: Research ranging from *N*-of-1 studies to randomized

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Table 1. AJOT Submission and Acceptance Rate and Total Publications, 2011–September 2016

Submissions	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011
Total submissions ^a	255	323	240	201	234	204
Accepted, <i>n</i> (%) ^a	76 (29.8)	136 (42.1)	80 (33.3)	70 (34.8)	92 (39.3)	72 (35.3)
Rejected, <i>n</i> (%) ^a	93 (36.5)	130 (40.2)	133 (55.4)	131 (65.2)	142 (60.7)	132 (64.7)
Total no. of published articles ^b	101	112	92	87	90	86
No. of published research studies ^c	89	97	68	71	80	75

Note. AJOT = American Journal of Occupational Therapy. AJOT manuscripts submitted in a given calendar year may be accepted and published in that year, may be accepted but not published until the next year, or may still be undergoing the review and revision cycle at the end of the publication year (and as of this printing).

^aStatistics for 2016 are through September 19, 2016. Previous years' statistics are for the full calendar year.

^bFor 2016, reflects all published articles through the November–December 2016 issue. Does not include Supplement 2, which contains AOTA official documents. ^cReflects all author-submitted and peer-reviewed manuscripts for 2016 and additional manuscripts that are initiated by AOTA.

clinical trials that examined the effect, efficacy, or effectiveness of a therapy intervention or educational pedagogy

- *Instrument development and testing studies*: Research involving assessment or therapy tool development
- *Basic studies*: Research that establishes relationships between conditions and occupational limitations, reports the prevalence or incidence of conditions or client factors within a condition, identifies predictors of outcomes, outlines the development of taxonomies, describes the testing and building of theories, explicates occupational science, or describes results of work with animals
- *Efficiency*: Studies that examine the cost-benefit ratio of occupational or interdisciplinary health care programs/interventions
- *Professional issues studies*: Research dealing with occupational therapy practitioners' knowledge or skills or that investigates practices in therapy provision
- *Health services studies*: Research describing health care practice or utilization of occupational therapy services or that discusses health care utilization disparities
- *Systematic reviews*: Research including scoping reviews and reviews of intervention effectiveness and basic research.

Consistent with AJOT's mission, the largest number of studies published measure effectiveness and provide basic knowledge that justifies occupational therapy intervention. This ongoing trend is encouraging because the profession is in critical need of evidence to support the mandate for occupational therapy and the efficacy and effectiveness of occupational

therapy interventions for its stakeholders (i.e., clients and families, insurers, legislators, other health professionals). This year saw a slight increase in the number of published effectiveness studies providing Level I and II

Table 2. Research Type, Practice Area, and Level of Evidence: AJOT Research Articles, January 2015–September 2016

Category	2016 (<i>N</i> = 89)	2015 (<i>N</i> = 97)
	<i>n</i> (%)	<i>n</i> (%)
Research type		
Effectiveness	26 (29.2)	30 (30.9)
Instrument development and testing	14 (15.7)	14 (14.4)
Basic	28 (31.5)	33 (34.0)
Efficiency	0	0
Professional issues	2 (2.2)	9 (9.3)
Health services	4 (4.5)	0
Systematic reviews ^a	15 (16.9)	10 (10.3)
Practice area		
Rehabilitation, disability, and participation	30 (33.7)	29 (29.9)
Children and youth	29 (32.6)	34 (35.1)
Productive aging	5 (5.6)	1 (1.0)
Mental health	6 (6.7)	3 (3.1)
Work and industry	0	0
Health, wellness, occupation, and participation	8 (9.0)	9 (9.3)
Professional issues	2 (2.2)	3 (3.1)
Health services	4 (4.5)	1 (1.0)
Occupational science	1 (1.1)	1 (1.0)
Education	3 (3.4)	15 (15.5)
Other	1 (1.1)	2 (2.1)
Level of evidence (effectiveness studies) ^b		
I	13 (37.1)	13 (34.2)
II	2 (5.7)	5 (13.2)
III	12 (34.3)	15 (39.5)
IV	5 (14.3)	1 (2.6)
V	3 (8.6)	4 (10.5)

Note. AJOT = American Journal of Occupational Therapy.

^aIncludes scoping reviews and reviews of intervention effectiveness and basic research. ^bLevels are based on the AOTA Evidence-Based Practice Project's model (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002); studies include systematic reviews of effectiveness studies but do not include scoping reviews; systematic reviews of instruments; or diagnostic, prevalence, or incidence studies.

evidence, suggesting that researchers are conducting more occupational therapy-related research that provides stronger evidence for practice. However, more than half of the intervention effectiveness studies published in AJOT were at lower levels of evidence, and the risk of bias in these studies is relatively high. Nine of the 13 Level I studies were systematic reviews rather than new trials of interventions. The need for high-level occupational therapy intervention research remains considerable, and that research needs to be published in occupational therapy journals. The rising impact factor is encouraging, however, because it reflects the rising prestige of the journal and may entice more researchers to publish high-level research in AJOT.

The most common topic categories of published articles continue to be (1) Rehabilitation, Disability, and Participation

and (2) Children and Youth; this pattern is not surprising given the large breadth of these categories. Other topic areas remain poorly represented, although several manuscripts could have been dually categorized. For example, “Simulator Measures and Identification of Older Drivers With Mild Cognitive Impairment” (Vardaki, Dickerson, Beratis, Yannis, & Papageorgiou, 2016) was classified as Productive Aging but could also have been classified as Rehabilitation, Disability, and Participation, whereas “Activities of Daily Living in Survivors of Childhood Brain Tumor” (Demers, Gélinas, & Carret, 2016) was classified under the Children and Youth grouping but could also have been categorized in Health, Wellness, Occupation, and Participation. To reduce publication costs and to better serve educators, the annual education supplement has been discontinued and instead, the journal will seek to publish one or two education manuscripts in each issue, depending on the timing and quality of submitted manuscripts.

Of research articles published through September 2016, 52.8% were supported by specific funding mechanisms (Table 3). 2016 saw a small increase in funding from the major U.S. federal funding agencies, such as the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The number of internationally funded manuscripts increased. However, about half of the published studies represented unfunded research, suggesting that occupational therapy still has significant potential to expand research funding. The continuing emphasis on the

importance of occupational participation, healthy life habits for managing chronic conditions, and life satisfaction as major health outcomes should drive funders to place more value on developing effective intervention strategies to obtain these outcomes, leading to greater funding for occupational therapy researchers.

Accomplishments

Several accomplishments were achieved this year:

- *AJOT* welcomed 43 new reviewers. Currently, reviewers come from around the world, including Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and India. The Editorial Board continues to recognize that reviewers are very busy and to keep requests for reviews manageable.
- The *AJOT* Editorial Board held a workshop in collaboration with the editorial board of *OTJR: Occupation, Participation and Health* at the AOTA Annual Conference & Expo in April to provide potential authors with information about the publishing process and offer tips for higher quality writing to foster the submission of manuscripts that are more publication ready. The two editorial boards have submitted an abstract for a similar workshop at the AOTA 2017 conference.
- *AJOT* is part of a multidisciplinary rehabilitation journal group, and as of January 1, 2016, all clinical trials published in *AJOT* and the other journals must be prospectively registered with Clinicaltrials.gov (or a similar site for international trials not registering with

Clinicaltrials.gov) before manuscripts are considered for publication. These journals use NIH's (2004) definition of *clinical trial*: “a research study in which one or more human subjects are prospectively assigned to one or more interventions (which may include placebo or other control) to evaluate the effects of those interventions on health-related biomedical or behavioral outcomes.” *AJOT* authors are encouraged to visit the NIH (2004) website for specific examples to ascertain whether their research study needs to be registered. Researchers who were already recruiting or had finished recruitment or data collection before the January 1 deadline were required to retrospectively register their trials before their manuscripts were considered for publication. Registering a trial on such sites reduces risk of bias and promotes higher quality evidence, hastening an increase in the quality of rehabilitation and related research.

- *AJOT* continues to award the annual Cordelia Myers *AJOT* Best Article Award for a high-impact article that describes high-quality research, is timely and highly relevant, and addresses an urgent need for information in the field (at least one author must be an occupational therapist). The article is chosen in a two-step process: A committee first selects one or two articles from each issue that meet these criteria, and a second committee makes the final selection from among these articles. The Best Article Award for 2015 went to Anne V. Kirby, Lauren M. Little, Beth Schultz, and Grace T. Baranek (2015) for

Table 3. Funding of *AJOT* Research Articles, January 2011–September 2016

Funding Source	2016 <i>n</i> (%)	2015 <i>n</i> (%)	2014 <i>n</i> (%)	2013 <i>n</i> (%)	2012 <i>n</i> (%)	2011 <i>n</i> (%)
National Institutes of Health	12 (13.5)	15 (15.5)	9 (13.2)	6 (8.5)	12 (15.0)	11 (14.7)
Other federal agency	8 (9.0)	2 (2.1)	6 (8.2)	3 (4.2)	9 (11.3)	4 (5.3)
U.S. state agency	2 (2.2)	2 (2.1)	1 (1.5)	2 (2.8)	0	0
U.S. foundation	7 (7.9)	5 (5.2)	12 (17.7)	6 (8.5)	10 (8.0)	10 (7.5)
U.S. university	7 (7.9)	4 (4.1)	6 (8.2)	4 (5.6)	3 (3.8)	0
U.S. doctoral scholarship	0	0	0	2 (2.8)	0	2 (2.7)
International funding source	16 (18.0)	6 (6.2)	5 (7.4)	9 (12.7)	7 (8.8)	10 (7.5)
Industry	0	0	1 (1.5)	—	—	—
Private donation	2 (2.2)	—	—	—	—	—
Total funded articles	47 (52.8)	28 (28.9)	27 (39.7)	32 (45.1)	41 (51.3)	33 (44.0)

Note. Some articles have more than one source of funding. Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding. *AJOT* = *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*; — = not applicable.

“Observational Characterization of Sensory Interests, Repetitions, and Seeking Behaviors.” *AJOT* will continue to bestow the Cordelia Myers *AJOT* Best Article Award in the fall of each year.

- *AJOT* published two special issues in 2016, one on occupational therapy for adults with traumatic brain injury, the result of a collaboration between *AJOT* and AOTA’s Evidence-Based Practice Project (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002), and the other on pediatric obesity.
- In 2015, *AJOT* began publication of the research abstracts from the AOTA Annual Conference & Expo in an online supplement, and continued to do so in 2016.
- The *AJOT* Editorial Board has planned a special section for each issue of the 2017 volume to celebrate AOTA’s Centennial and has disseminated calls for manuscripts. Each Centennial section will have at least two manuscripts dealing with different topics in occupational therapy. In the first issue, the Centennial section will focus on the history of occupational therapy and considerations for the future. Other issues will focus on topics in which occupational therapy has not traditionally been very involved or, after experiencing reduced involvement, is now seeing a need for increased emphasis. These topic areas are cancer treatment; youth-to-adult transitions; health, well-being, and quality of life; and mental health. In the last issue, the Centennial section will focus on occupational therapy internationally.

Concerns and Recommendations

AJOT’s goals are to remain the premier research journal for the occupational therapy profession and to increase the relevance of occupational therapy literature to related professions and researchers. To reach these goals, *AJOT* is using the following strategies:

- The Editorial Board will continue to implement policies and make acceptance decisions on the basis of the probability of increasing the journal’s impact factor, while continuing to attempt to represent the breadth of occupational

therapy research. Although the increase in 2015 is a step in the right direction, a 2-year impact factor of 2.00 or greater will put *AJOT* on par with the top journals of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the American Physical Therapy Association (Table 4). Strategies include the following steps:

- Publish systematic reviews, guided by PRISMA standards, on topics relevant to occupational therapy.
- Encourage submission of manuscripts describing studies with low risk of bias (i.e., Level I evidence methodology).
- To make the articles of more interest to other professions, ask *AJOT* authors to focus their introduction and discussion on the topic of their article rather than on the occupational therapy profession or the reasons occupational therapy needs to be involved in the topic. The relevance of a study to occupational therapy is reflected in its publication in *AJOT*, and its methodology can include that the intervention was provided in whole or in part by an occupational therapist. Authors should continue to tie the topic’s relevance to occupational engagement and related topics, such as occupational performance, roles, habits, and values, and *AJOT* continues to require an “Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice” section at the end of each research article.
- Encourage authors to cite relevant *AJOT* articles published within the past 5 years in addition to relevant articles in other publications.

- *AJOT* encourages occupational therapy-related manuscript submissions by authors of other disciplines. These authors may need to work with the managing editor on an appropriate “Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice” section.
- Special issues on critical topics in occupational therapy and occupational science, in collaboration with AOTA’s Evidence-Based Practice Project (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002) and as suggested by *AJOT* authors, have been very popular. Thus, *AJOT* will continue to plan these special issues. Special issues include articles de-

Table 4. *AJOT* Impact Factor, 2004–2015

Year	2-Year IF	5-Year IF
2015	1.806	2.113
2014	1.532	1.722
2013	1.552	1.831
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	NA
2005	0.634	NA
2004	0.676	NA

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

scribing original research as well as systematic reviews (of various kinds) of quantitative research and metasyntheses of qualitative research.

- In line with the increasingly global nature of the journal, the Editorial Board hopes to recruit additional international associate editors.

Conclusion

AJOT continues to be an important journal in occupational therapy around the world, and its prestige is growing. It receives a high number of submissions, and the quality of those submissions is increasing. Over the coming year, *AJOT* will maintain its goal of publishing quality research that speaks to the breadth and types of research related to occupational therapy. ▲

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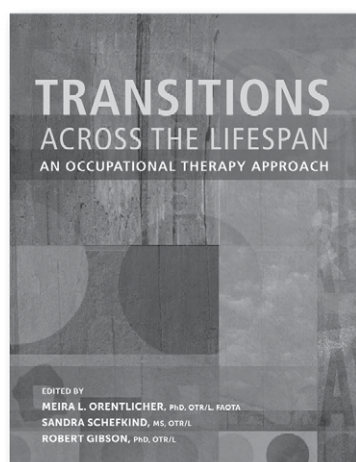
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