

# State of the Journal, 2017

Lorie Gage Richards

The *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* has had another successful year, with increases in its journal impact factor and its ranking among rehabilitation journals indexed by *Journal Citation Reports*. The number of submissions has increased, with manuscripts received from 28 countries. Readership has also increased. *AJOT* remains the top-ranked occupational therapy journal in the world. In addition to its usual focus on publishing research broadly related to occupational therapy, *AJOT* created a Centennial section in each issue to celebrate the Centennial of the American Occupational Therapy Association. Centennial section topics were determined on the basis of their relevance to occupational therapy history and to future or emerging or increasing practice areas in occupational therapy. In her presidential address at the American Occupational Therapy Association's 2017 Annual Conference & Centennial Celebration, Amy Lamb honored occupational therapy's past and embraced its future. Occupational therapy practitioners have the power to serve as change agents, demonstrating their value during everyday opportunities as they design the future of occupational therapy.

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The *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* is a global occupational therapy journal. The journal continues to have the highest prestige of occupational therapy journals around the world. Its 2016 2-year and 5-year journal impact factors jumped to 2.053 and 2.322 from its 2015 levels of 1.806 and 2.113, respectively (Table 1). *AJOT*'s ranking among rehabilitation journals in the Social Science Citation Index category by the *Journal Citation Reports* increased from 22nd of 71 to 8th of 70.

We have also started to monitor other measures of journal impact. Scopus ranks *AJOT* 2nd in journals in the occupational therapy category. However, the top-ranked journal in this category is an interdisciplinary journal, rather than an occupational therapy-specific journal, meaning that Scopus ranks *AJOT* as the top occupational therapy journal. In addition, the Scopus CiteScore includes all journal document types, including editorials and notes, unlike the journal impact factor, which includes only articles and reviews. The CiteScore is the average citation per document, calculated as the citation count for Year 1 divided by the number

of documents from the previous 3 years. Therefore, for *AJOT*, the citation count for 2016 (501) is divided by the number of documents published from 2013 to 2015 (387), for a CiteScore of 1.29. The Scopus Source Normalized Impact per Paper (SNIP) metric provides a domain-normalized citation score based on a domain's citation potential. This metric takes into consideration that different domains of study have different publishing and citation patterns. *AJOT*'s SNIP metric is 1.258. (See <https://www.scopus.com/sourceid/28566?origin=sbrowse#tabs=1> for *AJOT* Scopus overview.)

Once again, changes were made to *AJOT*'s Editorial Board this year. We said goodbye to Roxanna Bendixen, Hector Tsang, and Linda Shriber as Associate Editors after many years of service on the board. We very much appreciate their service to *AJOT*. Andy Cheng, Véronique Provencher, and Stacey Reynolds took their places as new *AJOT* Associate Editors. In addition, because of the increased number of submissions to the journal, we have increased the size of the Editorial Board, adding Emily Piven and Michael Pizzi as new Associate Editors.

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**Table 1. AJOT Impact Factor, 2004–2016**

Year	2-yr IF	5-yr IF
2016	2.053	2.322
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.

## 2017 Article and Readership Statistics

Table 2 shows statistics for AJOT manuscript submissions for 2017 compared with the previous 5 years. As of September 11, 2017, 266 manuscripts had been submitted to the journal. We accepted 78 for publication in either 2017 or 2018 issues. Researchers from across the globe continue to submit manuscripts to AJOT: Between January 1, 2017, and September 25, 2017, authors from 28 countries other than the United States submitted manuscripts.

From January to September 2017, AJOT articles were accessed by individuals a total of 716,690 times (461,543 HTML views and 255,147 PDF downloads). In the same period in 2016, articles were accessed by individuals 629,659 times; the 2017 data thus represent an increase of 13.8% over 2016. Nearly half of those accessing AJOT online (47.5%) were new visitors.

Fewer research articles were published in 2017 than in 2016. This decrease is due

to the Centennial sections added to the 2017 issues, which included several scholarly opinion articles rather than research studies. Research articles continue to be classified into the following categories:

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

Of the research articles published, the two most common categories were effectiveness studies and basic research studies (Table 3). In 2017, AJOT published the same proportion of effectiveness studies as in 2016. Of these studies, more than 60% provided Level I evidence. However, 17 of the 23 Level I effectiveness studies (74%)

were scoping or systematic reviews. Thus, as in previous years, most of the highest level effectiveness studies AJOT published were not new studies testing the impact of interventions. This finding suggests either that occupational therapy needs to engage in more high-level evidence trials or that such trials are being published in other journals, to which many occupational therapy clinicians are likely to have less access. It is not surprising that AJOT publishes many basic research articles, because this category encompasses a broad range of research.

The most common practice area categories remain similar to those of previous years (Table 3). In 2017, more mental health and health, wellness, occupation, and participation articles were published as a result of the special issues on dementia and health and wellness. Education articles were also more prevalent in 2017. Note that articles can often be classified be into more than one practice area. For example, "Everyday Technology Use Relates to Activity Involvement in Cognitive Decline" (Hedman, Nygård, & Kottorp, 2017) was classified as Mental Health but could also have been classified as Rehabilitation, Participation, and Disability or Occupation and Participation.

Fewer articles published in AJOT in 2017 had funding than in 2016 (Table 4). Federal funding decreased, whereas funding from foundations, industry, and other mechanisms increased. International funding also decreased. It is hoped that with the World Health Organization's (WHO's) new emphasis on rehabilitation and the number of recently completed feasibility studies in occupational therapy ready for higher level trials that the number of occupational therapy-related studies that are funded will increase.

**Table 2. AJOT Submission and Acceptance Rate and Total Publications, 2012–September 2017**

Submissions	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
Total submissions <sup>a</sup>	266	255	323	240	201	234
Accepted, <i>n</i> (%) <sup>a</sup>	78 (29.3)	76 (29.8)	136 (42.1)	80 (33.3)	70 (34.8)	92 (39.3)
Rejected, <i>n</i> (%) <sup>a</sup>	150 (56.4)	93 (36.5)	130 (40.2)	133 (55.4)	131 (65.2)	142 (60.7)
Total no. of published articles <sup>b</sup>	111	101	112	92	87	90
No. of published research studies	80	89	97	68	71	80

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).

<sup>a</sup>Statistics for 2017 are through September 25, 2017. Previous years' statistics are for the full calendar year. <sup>b</sup>Reflects published articles through the November–December 2017 issue. Does not include Supplement 2, which contains American Occupational Therapy Association official documents. Reflects all submitted and published or in-press manuscripts for 2017 plus additional manuscripts that AJOT publishes that are not author-initiated manuscripts.

**Table 3. Research Type, Practice Area, and Level of Evidence: *AJOT* Research Articles, January 2015–September 2017**

Category	2017 ( <i>N</i> = 80) <i>n</i> (%)	2016 ( <i>N</i> = 89) <i>n</i> (%)	2015 ( <i>N</i> = 97) <i>n</i> (%)
<b>Research type</b>			
Effectiveness	24 (30.0)	26 (29.2)	30 (30.9)
Instrument development and testing	9 (11.3)	14 (15.7)	14 (14.4)
Basic	23 (28.8)	28 (31.5)	33 (34.0)
Efficiency	0	0	0
Professional issues	2 (2.5)	2 (2.2)	9 (9.3)
Health services	0	4 (4.5)	1 (1.0)
Systematic reviews <sup>a</sup>	18 (22.5)	15 (16.9)	10 (10.3)
Centennial	4 (5.0)	—	—
<b>Practice area</b>			
Rehabilitation, disability, and participation	27 (33.3)	30 (33.7)	29 (29.9)
Children and youth	16 (20.0)	29 (32.6)	34 (35.1)
Productive aging	1 (1.2)	5 (5.6)	1 (1.0)
Mental health	11 (13.8)	6 (6.7)	3 (3.1)
Primary care	1 (1.2)	—	—
Work and industry	0	0	0
Health, wellness, occupation, and participation	11 (13.8)	8 (9.0)	9 (9.3)
Professional issues	3 (3.8)	2 (2.2)	3 (3.1)
Health services	0	4 (4.5)	1 (1.0)
Occupational science	0	1 (1.1)	1 (1.0)
Education	7 (8.8)	3 (3.4)	15 (15.5)
Other	4 (5.0)	1 (1.1)	2 (2.1)
<b>Level of evidence (effectiveness studies: <i>n</i> = 38)<sup>b</sup></b>			
I	23 (60.5)	13 (37.1)	13 (34.2)
II	3 (7.9)	2 (5.7)	5 (13.2)
III	9 (23.7)	12 (34.3)	15 (39.5)
IV	1 (2.6)	5 (14.3)	1 (2.6)
V	2 (5.3)	3 (8.6)	4 (10.5)

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

<sup>a</sup>Includes scoping reviews and reviews of intervention effectiveness, instruments, and basic research. <sup>b</sup>Levels are based on the American Occupational Therapy Association 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.

## Accomplishments

Several accomplishments were achieved this year:

- *AJOT* welcomed new reviewers again this year. 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 so that the editorial board continues to attempt to make requests for reviews manageable.
- The *AJOT* Editorial Board held a workshop in collaboration with the editorial board of *OTJR: Occupational, Participation, Health* at the 2017 American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Annual Conference and Expo to provide reviewers and potential reviewers with information about the publishing

process and offer tips for higher quality reviewing to foster higher quality and timely peer reviews.

- *AJOT* continues to be part of a multidisciplinary rehabilitation journal group, which copublished two manuscripts describing the National Institutes of Health (NIH) agenda for rehabilitation research: “Rehabilitation Research at the National Institutes of Health: Moving the Field Forward (Executive Summary)” (Frontera et al., 2017) and “National Institutes of Health Research Plan on Rehabilitation” (NIH Medical Rehabilitation Coordinating Committee, 2017).
- The Cordelia Myers *AJOT* Best Article Award was awarded to Sophia Vardaki, Anne E. Dickerson, Ion Beratis, George Yannis, and Sokratis G. Papageorgiou (2016) for their article “Simulator Measures and Identification of Older Drivers

With Mild Cognitive Impairment.”

This award goes to the article that is considered as best meeting the following criteria: 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). To select the award-winning article, a committee first selects one to two articles from each issue that meet these criteria. Then, a second committee votes for the final awardee.

- *AJOT* published four special issues in 2017. These were on occupational therapy in musculoskeletal conditions; neurorehabilitation; health, well-being, and quality of life; and Alzheimer's disease and other dementias. The special issues on musculoskeletal conditions and Alzheimer's disease and other

**Table 4. Funding of *AJOT* Research Articles, January 2012–September 2017**

Funding Source	2017 ( <i>N</i> = 80) <i>n</i> (%)	2016 ( <i>N</i> = 89) <i>n</i> (%)	2015 ( <i>N</i> = 97) <i>n</i> (%)	2014 ( <i>N</i> = 68) <i>n</i> (%)	2013 ( <i>N</i> = 71) <i>n</i> (%)	2012 ( <i>N</i> = 80) <i>n</i> (%)
National Institutes of Health	8 (10.0)	12 (13.5)	15 (15.5)	9 (13.2)	6 (8.5)	12 (15.0)
Other federal agency	1 (1.3)	8 (9.0)	2 (2.1)	6 (8.8)	3 (4.2)	9 (11.3)
U.S. state agency	0	2 (2.2)	2 (2.1)	1 (1.5)	2 (2.8)	0
U.S. foundation	10 (12.5)	7 (7.9)	5 (5.2)	12 (17.6)	6 (8.5)	10 (12.5)
U.S. university	9 (11.3)	7 (7.9)	4 (4.1)	6 (8.8)	4 (5.6)	3 (3.8)
U.S. doctoral scholarship	0	0	0	0	2 (2.8)	0
International funding source	11 (13.8)	16 (18.0)	6 (6.2)	5 (7.4)	9 (12.7)	7 (8.8)
Industry	2 (2.5)	0	0	1 (1.5)	—	—
Private donation	0	2 (2.2)	—	—	—	—
Other <sup>a</sup>	8 (10.0)	—	—	—	—	—
Total funded articles	37 (46.3)	47 (52.8)	28 (28.9)	27 (39.7)	32 (45.1)	41 (51.3)

Note. Some articles have more than one source of funding. *AJOT* = *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*; — = not applicable.

<sup>a</sup>Reflects U.S. organizations that do not fit the other categories, such as hospitals, societies, and associations.

- dementias were in collaboration with AOTA's Evidence-Based Practice Project (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002).
- The *AJOT* Editorial Board created a special section for each 2017 issue in celebration of AOTA's Centennial. The topics for each issue were as follows:
    - Issue 1: History of occupational therapy and practice areas for the future
    - Issue 2: Occupational therapy in cancer
    - Issue 3: Transitions to adult roles for youth with special needs
    - Issue 4: Community practice
    - Issue 5: Mental health practice
    - Issue 6: Research of international authors or international collaborations.
  - The *AJOT* Editor-in-Chief attended the WHO Rehabilitation 2030 meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, at the request of the WHO. This was a meeting of stakeholders (e.g., ministers of health from various countries; representatives from professional organizations for rehabilitation, health professionals, and populations with disabilities; rehabilitation researchers; journal editors of rehabilitation-related journals; individuals with disabilities) to assist the WHO in determining goals and plans for implementing its new emphasis on rehabilitation around the world. The editor of the *Scandinavian Journal of Occupational Therapy* and a representative from the *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy* also attended.
  - The *AJOT* Editor-in-Chief attended a research reproducibility conference

held at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, that was attended by many journal editors. This conference highlighted the significant issue of the lack of reproducibility across all branches of science and applied science, often because of lack of detail in reporting research methods. The conference started the dialogue of how to address this issue in the current era of journal page limitations as a result of publication costs and entrepreneurship. Because of increased concern about research reproducibility, *AJOT* is instituting additional requirements for clinical trials to more precisely present research findings.

## Concerns and Recommendations

*AJOT*'s goal is to remain occupational therapy's leading research journal. To maintain this status, the journal is using the following strategies:

- The Editorial Board will continue to implement policies and make acceptance decisions based on the probability of increasing the journal's impact factor while continuing to attempt to represent the breadth of occupational therapy research. Strategies include
  - Publishing systematic reviews on topics relevant to occupational therapy guided by PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) standards.
  - Encouraging submission of manuscripts describing studies with low risk

of bias (e.g., Level I evidence methodology), especially those with larger sample sizes, which allow for more precise measurement of effect sizes and have higher external validity.

- When the topic of the study is a particular intervention or assessment, has a prevalence of occupational limitations, or is mechanistic, having *AJOT* authors focus the introduction and discussion (except for the "Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice" section) on the study topic, not the occupational therapy profession or why occupational therapy needs to be involved in such an area. This approach will broaden article interest beyond occupational therapy. Discussion should include how the topic is relevant to participation in occupations, such as occupational performance, habits, roles, and values. The methods may state that the intervention or testing was provided by an occupational therapist. The relevance of a study to occupational therapy is reflected in its publication in *AJOT*. If the study directly investigates the occupational therapy profession (e.g., what occupational therapists do; attitudes of occupational therapists), then authors should discuss occupational therapy in the introduction and discussion.
  - Encouraging authors to cite relevant *AJOT* articles published within the past 5 years in addition to relevant articles in other publications.
- Authors of any discipline may submit occupational therapy-related manuscripts

to *AJOT*. These authors may ask for assistance from the managing editor on an appropriate “Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice” section.

- Special issues on critical topics in occupational therapy and occupational science continue to be very popular, thus *AJOT* plans to continue having special issues. These issues are created in collaboration with AOTA’s Evidence-Based Practice Project (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002) or are suggested by *AJOT* authors. Special issues can include articles describing original research, various types of systematic reviews of quantitative research, and metasyntheses of qualitative research.

## Conclusion

*AJOT* continues to be one of the world’s most important occupational therapy jour-

nals. The journal’s prestige is growing. It continues to receive an increasing number of submissions of ever higher quality. Over the coming year, *AJOT* will maintain its goal of publishing quality research that speaks to the breadth and types of occupational therapy research. ▲

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