

Characteristics of Level I (RCT) Evidence Based Research in Occupational Therapy

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INTRODUCTION. The project examined published research in which occupational therapy was studied that used the randomized controlled trial (RCT) design. **OBJECTIVES/RATIONALE** The objective was to evaluate 12 characteristics of publications to determine ideas or trends that might promote additional research by occupational therapists using the RCT design. RCT studies were selected because the design is the preferred or "goal standard" approach in the levels of evidence used in evidence based practice analysis. If occupational therapists would be encouraged to conduct more RCT studies, the practice of occupational therapy might be viewed more favorably by physicians, policy makers, and reimbursement agencies. **METHODS,** Journal articles published in English from 2000-2007 were identified from bibliographic and full-text databases. The articles had to be authored by occupational therapists or have included occupational therapy practice in the study design. Examples of characteristics included the specific condition (disorder, disease or injury) studied, intervention process or specific technique applied, location of the study (institution, home or community), researcher profile (interdisciplinary or therapist only), measurement approach used in data analysis, country of origin, funding source, and journal used for publication. One hundred twenty journal articles were examined **RESULTS.** Studies treating strokes were most common followed by falls, cerebral palsy, dementia, fractures, rheumatoid arthritis, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Occupational therapists were authors in 86 of the articles. The USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Sweden and the Netherlands published the most articles. Most researchers were from universities and hospitals affiliated with universities. Funding was from both governmental and non-governmental sources. The journal *Clinical Rehabilitation* had the most publications; the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy* was the only occupational therapy journal with multiple RCT publications and only 18 articles appeared in occupational therapy journals. **CONCLUSIONS.** Conclusion were that the rate of publication of RCT studies in occupational therapy remains low. RCT studies for many diagnoses were not located at all or had only one study. **CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE:** Working in or with a university or university hospital increases research activity. Working with an interdisciplinary team is helpful. Occupational therapists need to encourage publication of RCT studies in occupational therapy journals where occupational therapists are likely to read the results.