

## Research Culture in a Regional Australian Health Setting

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**Introduction:** For evidence-based practice in allied health, research evidence is vital yet the research capacity is considered low.

**Objectives:** To evaluate the research culture and capacity of allied health professionals in a regional setting, identifying and furthering the understanding of barriers and enablers for research.

**Method:** A cross sectional design was used. Staff in nine allied health disciplines, including occupational therapists completed an online survey, Research Culture and Capacity tool, which has three domains: individual, team and organisation.

**Results:** 136 participants completed the survey, including 40 occupational therapists. 73% of occupational therapists were motivated to conduct research and develop skills, while 48% were motivated to undertake research for career advancement and 53% were motivated to conduct research for job satisfaction. There were multiple barriers for occupational therapists to undertake research with 83% citing other work roles taking priority, 78% reported a lack of time for research, while 40% had a lack of skills and reported a lack of funds for research. There was a statistical significant difference in the domains of Organisation and Team between occupational therapists and social workers.

**Practice Implications:** Further investment to increase research skills and support for occupational therapists is needed using multi-layered strategies including collaborative research relationships and positions.

**Conclusion:** Current research culture of allied health professionals and occupational therapists appears to be low. To improve research culture, barriers need to be addressed and research leadership strengthened to increase translation of evidence into practice and ultimately community health outcomes.