

The Australian and New Zealand Occupational Therapy Mental Health Academics (ANZOTMHA) network: A unique collaboration ready for replication

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Introduction: The Australian and New Zealand Occupational Therapy Mental Health Academics (ANZOTMHA) network was established in 2012 to promote collaboration and information sharing between occupational therapy mental health academics and the broader community of occupational therapists in mental health. The network has been successful in harnessing the energy and goodwill of its members to engage in activities designed to improve education, research, and practice in mental health.

Objectives: To describe the development, growth, and projects completed by the ANZOTMHA network, and provide a model that can be replicated in other regions.

Approach: ANZOTMHA has representatives from all of the 23 universities offering occupational therapy programs in Australia and New Zealand. The group meets three to four times per year and works between these times on collaborative projects. These projects included sharing teaching resources, instigating a special issue of Australian Occupational Therapy Journal and a multi-stage research program.

Results: The network's research and benchmarking activities have resulted in two collaborative publications, a technical report and several international conference presentations and workshops. These represent outputs from a program of research investigating educational priorities for occupational therapy students and form an important foundation for curriculum review to support graduates' preparedness for careers in mental health.

Conclusion: ANZOTMHA provides an encouraging example of what can be achieved when academics work towards a common goal. The model does not require any specific funding or other resources, so could be easily replicated in, and adapted to, other regions.