

# Free Access to Evidence-Based Resources on the Web

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One of the major advances of the Internet is its ability to link people to information in ways that were impossible just a few short years ago. For occupational therapy practitioners interested in developing an evidence-based practice (EBP), the Internet has provided increased connections, primarily through accessibility to resources such as electronic bibliographic databases and electronic journals. One of the challenges of practicing from an EBP perspective is having access to useful bibliographic databases and electronic journals. For those with access to a hospital, college, or university library, this may be rather simple process because many libraries subscribe to a wide range of electronic journals. Also, some college and university alumni associations offer online library access as a benefit of association membership. In addition, some occupational therapy academic programs offer

library access for practitioners serving as fieldwork supervisors.

For those without access to these resources, a number of bibliographic databases are available for free on the Internet. Although most are familiar with PubMed ([www.ncbi.nlm.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.gov)); OT Seeker ([www.otseeker.com](http://www.otseeker.com)); and Education Resources Information Network (ERIC) ([www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov)); others such as Ageline and AgeSource Worldwide ([www.aarp.org/research/agesource](http://www.aarp.org/research/agesource)); Cochrane Collaboration ([www.cochrane.org](http://www.cochrane.org)); Campbell Collaboration ([www.campbellcollaboration.org](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org)); Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>); and PsycBite (<http://www.psycbite.com>), a database of interventions for persons with brain injuries, also provide a wealth of evidence-based information.

Free access to electronic journals has been made easier, thanks to the Open Access movement, which was first proposed by researchers in the

1960s and became a reality in the 1990s with the advent of technology that allowed for easy compilation and sharing of information (e.g., the Internet, electronic databases, and mark-up language such as HTML). The Open Access movement advocates the unrestricted dissemination of all scientific information ([www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm)). Open access provides free, immediate, digital access to biomedical and social science literature, often with limited copyright and licensing restrictions.

One can access the full text of research literature through a variety of sources. PubMed, a service of the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), manages PubMedCentral, a free digital archive of the peer-reviewed biomedical and life science literature ([www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/](http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/)). After selecting the link for "Journal List," one has access to those journal articles that are available for free. Journals of interest to occupational therapy practitioners available through PubMed Central include *American Journal of Public Health*, *BMJ*, and *Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. Recently, a policy has been instituted requiring all manuscripts based on work funded by NIH to be posted on PubMedCentral. More information regarding the NIH Public Access Policy can be found on PubMed's homepage ([www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?db=pubmed](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?db=pubmed)).

Another database, ERIC ([www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov)), also provides free access to selected journal articles. Using the Advanced Search feature, one can target search results to journal articles

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Ageline/AgeSource Worldwide:** [www.aarp.org/research/agesource/](http://www.aarp.org/research/agesource/)

**Campbell Collaboration:** [www.campbellcollaboration.org](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org)

**Cochrane Collaboration:** [www.cochrane.org](http://www.cochrane.org)

**Education Resources Information Center:** [www.eric.ed.gov](http://www.eric.ed.gov)

**Google Scholar:** <http://scholar.google.com>

**National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research:** [www.ncddr.org/cochrane/](http://www.ncddr.org/cochrane/)

**Open Access Review:** [www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm](http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/overview.htm)

**OT Seeker:** [www.otseeker.com](http://www.otseeker.com)

**Psychological Database for Brain Impairment Treatment Efficacy:** [www.psycbite.com/](http://www.psycbite.com/)

**PubMed Central:** [www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/](http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/)

**PubMed:** [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?db=pubmed](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez?db=pubmed)

structure, which if followed and documented, can serve as evidence that a practitioner is systematically assessing and developing competence. The Board and Specialty Certification programs all require rigorous documentation of knowledge, skills, and related client outcomes, all of which are consistent with the Joint Commission expectations. It is for this reason that some departments are building staff incentives into their Human Resources systems to reward practitioners who obtain AOTA certifications.

An additional benefit accrues to organizations that have an AOTA Board or Specialty certified staff member. Consistent with Joint Commission standards, staff doing the competence assessments must be qualified to do so. Individuals with Board or Specialty Certification could verify learning appropriate to the setting and client populations.

## BRING IT ON HOME

So what can you do in your setting?

The Rehabilitation Institute of Michigan (where the first author is a manager) is an example of one facility that supports staff continuing education financially by bringing in courses and sending staff to workshops. They now provide a bonus upon completion of competency-based professional certifications. The Joint Commission had favorable comments for the evidence of this extra effort to maintain optimal training for staff. It is just another example of those old quality management expectations...doing the right thing and doing the right thing right! ■

## References

1. Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. (2008). *Comprehensive accreditation manual for hospitals: The official handbook*. Oakbrook Terrace, IL: Joint Commission Resources.
2. American Occupational Therapy Association. (2003). *Professional Development Tool*. Bethesda, MD: Author. Retrieved October 17, 2008, from <http://www.aota.org/Practitioners/ProfDev/PDT.aspx>

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## Careers

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That's one important way it would benefit the profession of occupational therapy."

Several core treatment principles underlie the Living Lab's approach to elder care. Gitlin says that these include using a client-centered approach, promoting active problem-solving to help older adults learn to self-manage their conditions, and tailoring strategies for the unique environments of older adults and their families. Another core principle, Gitlin adds, is to work from a cultural perspective; that is, from an understanding and respect of an elder's cultural values and preferences. As the Living Laboratory moves forward, Gitlin and Piersol note that getting to this point was not without its obstacles.

"Everything takes more time than you think it's going to," Piersol says. "You think there are 10 steps you have to go through, but there are 10 steps for each of those." She adds that the positives outweigh the negatives (such as time commitment), because people are excited about the Living Laboratory, including physicians; administrators for agencies that deal with older adults; and industry leaders, who see that the Laboratory's interventions are proven and can actually be applied to practice.

"We have a definite plan and intended course, but as we move forward our experience and knowledge will inform the direction of the Living Laboratory," Piersol says. "We are fortunate to have a core staff of master occupational therapists who espouse our vision." Piersol adds that although the Living Laboratory will involve and train occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants, it will also expand to involve and train others in the health care profession. "We hope to offer different health professionals a tool kit of evidence-based approaches grounded in core practice principles," says Gitlin. "In this way, we hope to have a leadership role in creating new systems of care for older adults and their families."

Piersol says, "As we move along, our focus will evolve to address emerging service and training needs: the Living Lab is living." ■

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## Evidence Perks

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available in full text. Two additional sources provide access to a wide range of journal articles of interest to occupational therapy practitioners searching for evidence. Highwire Press (<http://highwire.stanford.edu/>), a division of Stanford University Libraries, provides access to a variety of journals. Journals listed within Highwire Press include *Age and Ageing*, *Evidence Based Mental Health*, and *Physical Therapy*. The Directory of Open Access Journals ([www.doaj.org](http://www.doaj.org)), a source of scientific and scholarly literature, provides access to journals printed in all languages. With a variety of sponsors, the Directory is housed at Lund University in Sweden and includes journals in the health and social sciences.

Other sources on the Internet provide either free or partial free access to quality-controlled summaries of systematic reviews. The Campbell Collaboration provides free access to systematic reviews in the areas of education, social welfare, and crime and justice. Although the abstracts and plain language summaries of Cochrane reviews are open to all, access to the full reviews are available either through institution or individual subscriptions. Recently, access to the Cochrane library has been made free of charge to National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research-funded researchers. Information on this service can be found online at [www.ncddr.org/cochrane](http://www.ncddr.org/cochrane).

Although access to evidence-based resources on the Internet is not yet universal, the amount of freely available literature grows daily. Use of readily and freely accessible information can help all occupational therapy practitioners overcome one of the barriers to finding evidence to inform occupational therapy practice. ■

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