

Using Evidence in Practice

Experience From the Trenches

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Providing best practice has always been at the forefront of occupational therapy. Since 1998, AOTA's Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) project has incorporated this concept by developing and providing resources that enable occupational therapy practitioners to find and use research evidence that supports their practice. AOTA's Centennial Vision has strengthened the goal of using evidence and provides a clear path for occupational therapy practitioners working with all individuals by emphasizing excellence in service that is informed by evidence.

We have long known that the use of evidence is growing. This latest

the most up-to-date research possible to the families of children with whom she worked. Her studies at VCU introduced her to EBP, and she developed the skills she needed to search for evidence and analyze the research literature. As a result of her proficiency and confidence in research analysis, she reports that she became the "go to" person for teachers and administrators in her school district. She believes that presenting evidence brought credibility to her work and also resulted in better collaboration with coworkers, teachers, consumers, and administrators.

Wyrick's capstone project for her OTD, also at VCU, brought her work

involvement in EBP. As a student in the Master's Program in Occupational Therapy at Boston University, as well as during her fieldwork in the EBP Project at AOTA, Maglio fine tuned her curiosity and ability to ask questions and challenge the status quo. She has continued using these skills during the 2 1/2 years she has worked as an occupational therapist at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital in Boston.

Although finding time to look for evidence has been challenging, Maglio reports that she makes it a priority, as she feels that it is crucial to providing best practice. Taking a monthly course on research and statistics through the Clinical Scholars Program at Spaulding has helped her hone her evidence skills and provided her with the confidence to think about partnering with others in clinical research projects that will result in evidence for practice. As a result of her efforts, Maglio was asked to present on the evidence for occupational therapy interventions for individuals with traumatic brain injury and stroke at the 2010 Massachusetts Occupational Therapy Association conference.

Although both Maglio and Wyrick mentioned that it does take time and energy to find and use evidence, they also said that partnering with others to share ideas facilitates the process. Both spoke of the value of journal clubs for sharing up-to-date information on evidence and strengthening critical appraisal skills. As a newer practitioner, Maglio spoke not only of the importance of having a supervisor who supports her interest in evidence, but also of her good fortune of having

Anita Wyrick, OTD, OTR/L, and Maddie Maglio, MS, OTR/L, show that with some time, effort, practice, and help from peers, it is possible to provide evidence-based, client-centered, and up-to-date care for consumers.

Evidence Perks profiles two occupational therapists who have made incorporating evidence an important part of their practice. Anita Wyrick, OTD, OTR/L, and Maddie Maglio, MS, OTR/L, bring evidence into practice in different ways, but both imbue their work with passion, curiosity, and a desire to make sure their clients receive interventions that are client centered and informed by evidence.

Wyrick's interest in EBP began before she entered her postprofessional master's program at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in 2000. As an occupational therapist working in the school system for 6 years, she was frustrated by not being able to get the information she needed for best practice, including providing

on EBP to another level. Her project was to develop and teach an online course on EBP to occupational therapy practitioners working in school districts in her local area in Virginia. Since her recent retirement, she has also taught a course on EBP at VCU as well as half-day and 2-hour workshops at a variety of conferences, including AOTA and Virginia Occupational Therapy Association annual conferences. These venues have enabled occupational therapy practitioners to develop their skills for finding evidence and critically appraising the research in order to incorporate evidence into their practice.

Maddie Maglio credits her family's interest in researching topics of importance as the spark for her

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Sarah Nielsen, MMT, OTR/L, works for the Trinity Health Child Adolescent Partial Hospitalization Program serving children ages 5 to 17. Nielsen has 10 years of experience with Level I and Level II fieldwork students. She is also an adjunct faculty member at the University of North Dakota.

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a more experienced mentor who is as passionate about research as she is. Discussions with the whole team also give her the opportunity to learn about evidence from others and to share the research findings she has discovered.

Maglio and Wyrick report that it is crucial to have a toolkit of resources available to overcome the most frequently reported barriers to using evidence: lack of time and the lack of knowledge of available resources. Both mentioned using online resources such as PubMed (www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed); Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>); AOTA Evidence-Based Practice Resources (www.aota.org/ebp), including the EBP Resource Directory; and OTseeker (www.otseeker.com) as first steps when looking for evidence. They also noted the importance of turning to more knowledgeable and experienced clinicians as valuable guides for finding evidence, and said that *Evidence-Based Rehabilitation: A Guide to Practice*¹ is a great book for finding resources for EBP.

As evidence becomes increasingly available for occupational therapy, practitioners appreciate hearing about examples of others who are committed to incorporating the findings from research into practice. Wyrick and Maglio show that with some time, effort, practice, and help from peers, it is possible to provide evidence-based, client-centered, and up-to-date care for consumers. ■

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