



Interagency Committee on Disability Research 2009 Public Comment Submission

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Would you like your name and affiliation to appear with your comments (yes or no)?
yes

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If you have problems submitting comments via the Web site please either:

- e-mail your comments to ICDRevents@cessi.net,
- fax them to 703-442-9015, or
- mail them to: ICDR c/o CESSI, 6858 Old Dominion Drive, Suite 250, McLean, VA 22101

Written comments must be:

- No longer than 250 words or 1,500 characters
- Single-spaced using 12-point font in Times New Roman
- Received or postmarked by April 17, 2009 (3:00 P.M. EDT)

Topic One: Collaboration and Coordination Among Federal Agencies

Topic Description: The ICDR is mandated to promote interagency research coordination, collaboration, and communication. Research activity partnerships, joint initiatives, knowledge exchange, and resource sharing are key components of research collaboration and coordination. Please identify concerns, strategies to enhance interagency research coordination and collaboration, and recommendations for joint research activities in specific research areas, including potential partners for the recommended joint activities.

Enter your comment on this topic here:

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) recommends that more collaborative funding for research projects would benefit people with disabilities and the organizations that serve them. For example, research projects funded by NIH (NCMRR), NIDRR and CDC could examine the use of community participation and community receptivity measures for assessing

the effectiveness of rehabilitation beyond the change in health status and capacity for performing activities in the controlled environments for rehabilitation facilities.

Partnerships between CMS and community and medical centers could result in demonstration projects that focus on secondary condition prevention such as: including funding for air filled seat cushions with air pressure alert systems to reduce skin ulcers; home health testing for early detection of urinary tract infections; alternative approaches to pharmaceutical treatments of bladder health; training for informal personal care provider for early detection of health problems; training for informal health providers on maintaining their own health; and training for the safe and efficient use of assistive technologies to perform daily activities.

Topic Two: Health Information Technology and/or Electronic Health Records

Topic Description: Health Information Technology, also known as Health IT, is a comprehensive management system between health care consumers and providers. Electronic health record refers to an individual patient's medical record in digital format.

Enter your comment on this topic here:

The adoption of health information technology is critical for efficient health care, improving safety (minimizing errors), and increasing communication among health care providers. The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) recommends the development and inclusion of functional codes (ICF and ICF-CY) in patient encounter forms. Pilot projects, in partnership with CMS, could test the utility of these forms.

If health information technology is increasingly adopted, it would be helpful if policies specify which software to use, so that health care providers can view electronic records as a patient moves from one system to another. Additionally, the inclusion of functionally-based information on national health surveys or specific templates used for certain diagnostic groups would be beneficial, as there would be potential to use de-identified health records as a database for research purposes.

Topic Three: Health Disparities

Topic Description: According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, health disparities refer to gaps in the access to health care resources and treatment, quality of health, and health outcomes across racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.

Enter your comment on this topic here:

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) supports efforts to reduce health disparities in all care settings. Many non-governmental organizations try to address health disparities but lack the interpreters or trained staff to communicate with many subpopulations. One recommendation is to offer training grants that are not university-based, but are online programs for health care professionals and students to learn how to communicate, respect, and intervene with people of different ethnic and cultural groups. A greater number of health care professionals could be trained in this model at a lower cost. Incentives for health professionals could include certification if they complete a certain number of modules, CEU credits, or free electronic resources.

To address health disparities in the community, funding is needed for health promotion projects that require community-based cross-disciplinary teams to address the subpopulations that are most in need of services (i.e., education, medication, primary care, and rehabilitation).

Topic Four: Health Promotion in the Workplace

Topic Description: Health promotion in the workplace refers to the interplay of health (mental and/or physical) and health benefits (i.e., health promotion, programs, etc.) for individuals in transition or remaining in the workforce.

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The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) strongly supports health promotion and prevention of injury in the workplace. However, research is hampered by the outdated Dictionary of Occupational Titles and O-NET. AOTA recommends that the Department of Labor, Social Security Administration, National Institute of Disability Research and Rehabilitation, and Veteran Affairs fund the revision of the Dictionary of Occupational Title and O-NET, using an analysis of people with disabilities employed at the occupations in the U.S. economy, including: essential tasks as described by both the employed and manager; task performance with appropriate assistive technologies or other supports; web site with video clips of people with disabilities doing the essential work tasks; compendium of reasonable accommodations for the job described in the new electronic database of jobs and tasks as performed by people with disabilities.

Topic Five: Employment and Health

Topic Description: Employment and health refer to how the physical, social and emotional benefits of employment affect health and well-being.

Enter your comment on this topic here:

Many individuals with disabilities could work with support and modifications. For example, a program that offers mentorship partnering and provision of appropriate assistive technologies could enable people with disabilities to return to work, even if they qualify for SSDI but seek employment. Cooperative agreements with SSA using the Tickets to Work program could fund such projects. Outcomes of these projects could include quality of life, perceived health, health care utilization and cost-effectiveness.

Research is needed to delineate how productive activities, like employment, promote lifelong health and reduce the risk of chronic disease and disability. The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) urges ICDR to consider work in a broad sense, including vocational training and volunteering.

Topic Six: Other Critical Research Issues

Enter your comment on this topic here:

Research is needed to evaluate the relative impact of person variables and environmental variables on participation in society among those with disabilities – at both a community and survey level.

There is also an urgent need to develop screening instruments for functional ability and performance deficits in persons of all ages, as well as those with chronic conditions. These screening instruments should demonstrate acceptable levels of sensitivity and specificity. Another issue related to measurement is the need for outcome instruments that are sufficiently responsive to measuring change in daily activities and participation.

Funding is also needed for research that creates and studies the effects of novel interventions for promoting activity performance, participation in society, and quality of life for people with disabilities or those at-risk for disabilities.

Finally, researchers should design and implement community-based participatory action research to increase the relevance, acceptability, and usefulness of evidence-based scientific findings to improve occupational therapy services.

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) appreciates this opportunity to comment on disability and rehabilitation research.