

# Using Evidence in Practice

## Experience From the Trenches

**Marian Arbesman**

**Lizabeth Metzger**

**Deborah Lieberman**

**P**roviding 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

*continued on page 15*

education to prompt self-development. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

7. American Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (2006). Standards for an accredited educational program for the occupational therapist. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61, 652-661.
8. Boud, D. (2001). Using journal writing to enhance reflective practice. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 90, 9-17.
9. Hiemstra, R. (2001). Uses and benefits of journal writing. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 90, 19-26.
10. Tryssenaar, J. (1995). Interactive journals: An educational strategy to promote reflection. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 49, 695-702.
11. Hong, L. K., & Chew, L. (2008). Reflective practice from the perspective of the bachelor of nursing students: A focus interview. *Singapore Nursing Journal*, 35(4), 42-48.
12. Lasater, K., & Nielsen, A. (2009). Reflective journaling for clinical judgment development and evaluation. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 48(1), 40-44.
13. Williams, R. M., Wessel, J., Gemus, M., & Foster-Seargeant, E. (2002). Journal writing to promote reflection by physical therapy students during clinical placements. *Physiotherapy Theory and Practice*, 18, 5-15.
14. Lahteenmaki, M. L. (2005). Reflectivity in supervised practice: Conventional and transformative approaches to physiotherapy. *Learning in Health and Social Care*, 4(1), 18-28.
15. Jung, B., & Tryssenaar, J. (1998). Supervising students: Exploring the experience through reflective journals. *Occupational Therapy International*, 5, 35-48.
16. McKay, E. A., & Ryan, S. (1995). Clinical reasoning through story telling: Examining a student's case story on a fieldwork placement. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 58, 234-238.
17. Brown, C., Bannigan, K., & Gill, J. (2009). Questioning: A critical skill in postmodern health-care service delivery. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 56, 206-210.
18. Langley, M. E., & Brown, S. T. (2010). Perceptions of the use of reflective learning journals in online graduate nursing education. *Nursing Education Perspectives*, 31(1) 12-17.
19. Schon, D. A. (1987). Educating the reflective practitioner. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Debra Hanson**, PhD, OTR/L, is the academic fieldwork coordinator at the University of North Dakota, which has campuses in Grand Forks, North Dakota; and Casper, Wyoming. Hanson has more than 20 years of experience working with fieldwork educators and students. She is the academic fieldwork coordinator representative for AOTA's Commission on Education.

**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.

**Jody K. Larson**, MS, OTR/L is lead occupational therapist at the North Dakota State Hospital. Larson has 28 years of experience working with Level I and Level II occupational therapy students and is an adjunct faculty member at the North Dakota State College of Science.

## Using Evidence in Practice

*continued from page 6*

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](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed)); Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>); AOTA Evidence-Based Practice Resources ([www.aota.org/ebp](http://www.aota.org/ebp)), including the EBP Resource Directory; and OTseeker ([www.otseeker.com](http://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*<sup>1</sup> 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. ■

## Reference

1. Law, M., & MacDermid, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Evidence-based rehabilitation: A guide to practice* (2nd ed.). Thorofare, NJ: Slack.

**Marian Arbesman**, PhD, OTR/L, is president of Arbesman Ideas in Williamsville, New York, and an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Rehabilitation Science at the State University of New York at Buffalo. She has served as a consultant with AOTA's Evidence-Based Practice Project since 1999.

**Lizabeth Metzger** is a Level II fieldwork student from Boston University. At AOTA, she is working on the Evidence-Based Practice Project and with the Federal Affairs Department.

**Deborah Lieberman**, MHSA, OTR/L, FAOTA, is the program director of AOTA's Evidence-Based Practice Project and staff liaison to AOTA's Commission on Practice. She can be reached at [dliberman@aota.org](mailto:dliberman@aota.org).

## Navigating Fieldwork's Ethical Challenges

*continued from page 10*

3. Kinsella, E., Park, A., Appiagyei, J., Chang, E., & Chow, D. (2008). Through the eyes of students: Ethical tensions in occupational therapy practice. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 75, 176-183.
4. Geddes, E., Wessel, J., & Williams, R. (2004). Ethical issues identified by physical therapy students during clinical placements. *Physiotherapy Theory and Practice*, 20, 17-29.
5. Brandt, L., & Homenko, D. (2008). Balancing patient rights and practitioner values. In D. Y. Slater (Ed.), *Reference guide to the occupational therapy ethics standards* (pp. 93-96). Bethesda, MD: AOTA Press.
6. Casares, G. S., Bradley, K. P., Jaffe, L. E., & Lee, G. P. (2003). Impact of the changing health care environment on fieldwork education. *Journal of Allied Health*, 32, 246-251.
7. Vogel, K. A., Grice, K. O., Hill, S., & Moody, J. (2004). Supervisor and student expectations of level II fieldwork. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care*, 18(1-2), 5-19.
8. Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (2006). *Accreditation standards for a doctoral-degree-level educational program for the occupational therapist*. Retrieved January 28, 2011, from <http://www.aota.org/educate/accr edit/standardsreview/guide/doctoral>
9. Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (2006). *Accreditation standards for a master's-degree-level educational program for the occupational therapist*. Retrieved January 28, 2011, from <http://www.aota.org/educate/accr edit/standardsreview/guide/masters>
10. Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education. (2006). *Accreditation standards for an educational program for the occupational therapy assistant*. Retrieved January 28, 2011, from <http://www.aota.org/educate/accr edit/standardsreview/guide/ota>
11. Thomas, Y., Dickson, D., Broadbridge, J., Hopper, L., Hawkins, R., Edwards, A., et al. (2007). Benefits and challenges of supervising occupational therapy fieldwork students: Supervisors' perspectives. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal*, 54, S2-S12. doi:10.1111/j.1440-1630.2007.00694.x
12. Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Pub. L. 101-336, 42 U.S.C. § 12101.
13. Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act of 2008. Pub. L. 110-325.
14. Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Pub. L. 104-191.
15. Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974. Pub. L. 93-380, 20 U.S.C. § 1232(g).
16. American Occupational Therapy Association. (2000). *Most frequently asked fieldwork questions*. Retrieved January 28, 2011, from <http://aota.org/educate/edres/fieldwork/newprograms /38242>
17. Kornblau, B. L. (1995). Fieldwork education and students with disabilities: Enter the Americans with Disabilities Act. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 49, 139-145.
18. Scott, R. (2009). *Promoting legal and ethical awareness: A primer for health professionals and patients*. St. Louis, MO: Mosby.
19. Cain, J. (2008). Online social networking issues within academia and pharmacy education. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, 72(1), 1-7.
20. Lipka, S. (2009, March 13). *Nursing student sues after U. of Louisville expels her for online posts about patients*. Retrieved January 28, 2011, from <http://chronicle.com/article/nursing-student-sues-after-u/42558>
21. Morris, J. F. (2003). Is it possible to be ethical? *OT Practice*, 8(4), 8-23.