

# Introducing... the Journal Club Toolkit

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**N**ewly minted occupational therapy practitioners enter the field bursting with knowledge and enthusiasm. But one of the things they may share with those currently in practice is a lack of a plan to maintain lifelong learning. Journal clubs provide an opportunity for members of a clinical team with varying levels of experience to share information about new and existing research literature. By combining learning and collaboration, journal clubs boost clinical reasoning and encourage the translation and use of evidence-based practice (EBP), with the ultimate goal of better client outcomes.

EBP has become even more important in light of changes in health care and education. Occupational therapy practitioners have a professional obligation to provide services that are cost effective, client centered, and supported by evidence. In addition, practitioners are being challenged to substantiate therapeutic effectiveness to clients, families, and third-party payers. A major focus of the Centennial Vision is the core value of being science driven and evidence based. Journal clubs can be an important component in ensuring that individual clinicians and administrators work toward this goal for 2017 and beyond.

As a participant in the Emerging Leader Development Program, mentee William Janes developed a survey on EBP. The survey was completed in 2010, with nearly 1,000 occupational therapy practitioners, educators, and students participating. The results of

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the survey indicated that members of the profession valued EBP but also identified a number of barriers to implementing it, including a lack of confidence in evaluating the quality of research and lack of time to read research literature.

To overcome such barriers and help practitioners benefit from EBP, Janes collaborated with Lizabeth Metzger, as part of her fieldwork placement at AOTA in 2011, to develop the Journal Club Toolkit (JCTK), which includes logistical documents, worksheets, and references useful for all stages of planning and running journal clubs. Sample fliers, planning documents, and continuing education documentation are provided to reduce the preparation time needed for a journal club session. In addition, a description of a variety of journal club formats helps users select the format most appropriate to their site-specific needs. Critical appraisal guides and worksheets are provided to assist in selecting and reviewing articles—two additional areas of need identified by survey respondents. A statistics reference sheet is provided to assist with interpreting study results. The kit can

be used in a variety of settings, with any population, and by any occupational therapy practitioner who wants to execute best practice.

After developing the toolkit, a pilot test was performed to evaluate its utility. Three pilot sites were chosen: a mental health setting, a pediatric setting, and a group of practitioners who formed a local special interest group. The occupational therapists conducting the journal clubs varied in level of clinical experience. Following the completion of their first journal club meetings, each facility involved in the pilot test filled out a survey based on their experience with the toolkit.

Feedback from the test sites was overwhelmingly positive, supporting the utility of this tool in a variety of clinical settings. Caitlin Synovec, OTR/L, an occupational therapist at Johns Hopkins Hospital, reported that the toolkit was surprisingly easy to use and that the preparation for her first journal club session took approximately 1 hour. Respondents generally reported that the planning documents and critical appraisal forms were the

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including hygiene care, an essential aspect of daily living. The authors have learned from each client and developed these protocols, which have been successful with this client population. Clients have reported confidence in performing leisure tasks, work-related activities, and other preferred activities safely with the LVAD. Caregivers have reported improved ability to care for their loved ones with LVADs with the education and training provided. It is evident that the occupational therapist has helped the LVAD client transition from acute care to the community. It is the hope of these authors that further discussion on this topic will fill the existing literature gap and provide support for occupational therapists who work in cardiac care. ■



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## EVIDENCE PERKS

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most useful components of the JCTK. The pilot sites also provided feedback on ways to improve the toolkit, and those recommendations have been incorporated. The end result is a collection of 20 documents designed to guide all phases of the journal club process, from selecting a journal club format and identifying articles to performing critical appraisals, leading discussions, and documenting outcomes. The toolkit is available free to AOTA members through the EBP portal at [aota.org/educate/research](http://aota.org/educate/research). A brief slide presentation is available to assist new users in starting a journal club. Ongoing support and conversation will be conducted via the Journal Club Toolkit Group on OT Connections ([http://otconnections.aota.org/groups/journal\\_club\\_toolkit/default.aspx](http://otconnections.aota.org/groups/journal_club_toolkit/default.aspx)). Members are encouraged to share their experiences with the JCTK and to assist one another in its implementation. ■

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**Lizabeth Metzger**, MS, OTR/L, last year completed a fieldwork placement at AOTA, in which she spent half of her time working with the EBP Project. She is currently a staff therapist at West Suburban Medical Center in Oak Park, Illinois.

## Evidence Resources

[www.aota.org/educate/research](http://www.aota.org/educate/research)

The Evidence-Based Practice & Research section of the AOTA Web site provides extensive resources organized by practice section, with links to the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, *OT Practice* (including features and past Evidence Perks), and Special Interest Section *Quarterly Newsletter* articles; AOTA's Evidence Briefs series; Evidence Bytes (from AOTA's *1-Minute Update*); federal grant opportunities; and more.