

# **SWAT 127: Qualitative exploration of occupational therapists' perspectives on barriers and enablers to helping conduct research**

## **Objective of this SWAT**

The primary objectives are to collect and analyse qualitative data from occupational therapists (OTs) who expressed interest in delivering a Cognitive-Occupation-based program for people with multiple sclerosis [excluding OTs participating in the treatment group; see program details (1)], to ascertain:

- (i) Reasons behind the decision to participate or not participate, in order to improve the conduct of future trials; and
- (ii) Potential barriers and enablers for healthcare professionals in helping to conduct research, particularly randomised trials.

Study area: Recruitment, Data Quality, Outcomes

Sample type: Healthcare Professionals

Estimated funding level needed: Very Low

## **Background**

Little research has been conducted on healthcare professionals who deliver interventions as part of clinical research, even though they are integral to the success of such research (2). For example, in the HRB-TMRN PRioRiTy I study's identification of key questions that remain unanswered in trial recruitment, one question centres on the barriers and enablers for clinicians and healthcare professionals in helping conduct randomised trials (3). While occupational therapy (OT) remains a relatively new discipline among health sciences and, as its scope is ever expanding, efforts have been made to advance theory and research in the field, to facilitate a more evidence-based way of practice (4). The aim of this expansion has not only been to improve OT practice, but also to reinforce OT's status among other health professions and to deliver the best client care possible (4, 5). Thus, there is impetus for OT to make research a priority and encourage clinicians to increase their engagement with research (6) and, indeed, occupational therapists are becoming increasingly involved in research (e.g. 7).

Although there is lack of research in this area, some studies have been conducted (e.g. 8), identifying a variety of potential barriers to occupational therapists' involvement in research. However, the identification of such barriers is limited to occupational therapists who were already actively engaged with a research program (9), which highlights a lack of research exploring the attitudes of occupational therapists who have chosen not to participate in a study or had their engagement significantly restricted (e.g. as a result of the study design). In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of both barriers to and enablers of getting involved in research programs, it is vital that the perspectives of occupational therapists not already involved in research is also considered.

## **Interventions and comparators**

Intervention 1: Cohort of Occupational Therapists

Index Type: Method of Recruitment

## **Method for allocating to intervention or comparator**

Expressed interest in host trial; but not delivering host trial's intervention.

## **Outcome measures**

Primary: A qualitative understanding of:

- (i) Reasons behind the decision to participate or not participate, in order to improve the conduct of future trials; and
- (ii) Potential barriers and enablers for healthcare professionals in helping to conduct research, particularly randomised trials.

Secondary: None, as the proposed qualitative outcomes are all primary in this exploratory SWAT

## **Analysis plans**

A series of three semi-structured focus group interviews will be conducted with approximately 20 occupational therapists who expressed interest in getting involved with the host trial, but did not participate in any meaningful way (i.e. receiving relevant training and subsequent delivery of the intervention). Data will be analysed thematically (10). Analysis will be an iterative, recursive process; characterised by continual re-reading of the data, data coding and thematic identification (e.g. development of categories/themes and hierarchical ordering). Coding and analysis will be supported by NVivo software.

## **Possible problems in implementing this SWAT**

Due to COVID-19 (and its indirect consequence of needing to conduct the SWAT's focus groups online), recruitment and subsequent connectivity issues might be problematic.

## **References**

- 1) Dwyer, C. P., Alvarez-Iglesias, A., Joyce, R., Counihan, T. J., Casey, D., & Hynes, S. M. (2020). Evaluating the feasibility and preliminary efficacy of a Cognitive Occupation-Based programme for people with Multiple Sclerosis (COB-MS): protocol for a feasibility cluster-randomised controlled trial. *Trials*, 21(1), 1-12.
- 2) Hysong SJ, Smitham KB, Knox M, et al. Recruiting clinical personnel as research participants: a framework for assessing feasibility. *Implementation Science* 2013;8(1):125.
- 3) Healy P, Galvin S, Williamson PR, et al. Identifying trial recruitment uncertainties using a James Lind Alliance Priority Setting Partnership—the PRioRiTy (Prioritising Recruitment in Randomised Trials) study. *Trials* 2018;19(1):147.
- 4) Kielhofner G. A scholarship of practice: creating discourse between theory, research and practice. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care* 2005;19:7-16.
- 5) White E, Hampson H, Gardiner L, et al. A review of occupational therapy research and development activity in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 2013;76(1):2-8.
- 6) Pighills AC, Plummer D, Harvey D, Pain T. Positioning occupational therapy as a discipline on the research continuum: Results of a cross-sectional survey of research experience. *Australian Occupational Therapy Journal* 2013;60(4):241-51.
- 7) Killaspy H, Marston L, Green N, et al. Clinical effectiveness of a staff training intervention in mental health inpatient rehabilitation units designed to increase patients' engagement in activities (the Rehabilitation Effectiveness for Activities for Life [REAL] study): single-blind, cluster-randomised controlled trial. *The Lancet Psychiatry* 2015;2(1):38-48.
- 8) Di Bona L, Wenborn J, Field B, et al. Enablers and challenges to occupational therapists' research engagement: A qualitative study. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* 2017;80(11): 642-50.
- 9) Wenborn J, Hynes S, Moniz-Cook E, et al. Community occupational therapy for people with dementia and family carers (COTiD-UK) versus treatment as usual (Valuing Active Life in Dementia [VALID] programme): study protocol for a randomised controlled trial. *Trials* 2016;17(1):65.
- 10) Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

## **Publications or presentations of this SWAT design**

None

## **Examples of the implementation of this SWAT**

People to show as the source of this idea: Dr Sinéad Hynes  
Contact email address: sinead.hynes@nuigalway.ie  
Date of idea: 1/DEC/2019  
Revisions made by: N/A  
Date of revisions: