

Evidence-based practice in Chile: a pending challenge

Jennifer Garcia¹, Jodie Copley¹, Merrill Turpin¹, Chi-Wen Chien², Natalia Pena³
¹*The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia,* ²*The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong, Hong Kong,* ³*Universidad Vina del Mar, Vina del Mar, Chile*

Introduction: Evidence-based practice (EBP) is a global movement aiming to support high quality practice by using sound evidence for decision making. Occupational therapists (OTs) have been challenged to adopt EBP as a global approach. Nevertheless, the scarcity of research conducted in developing countries suggests that evidence-based occupational therapy is not yet a worldwide reality. Chile, a developing country graduating an increasing number of OTs, provides a useful case for exploring EBP.

Objectives: To investigate the sources of information accessed by paediatric OTs in Chile, and identify how knowledge is built and integrated in practice.

Methods: Interpretive description provided the methodological framework. Ten Chilean OTs with diverse demographic profiles participated, completing in-depth interviews regarding their decision-making in practice. Interviews were conducted in Spanish, transcribed and then translated into English. Data were coded and analyzed thematically. Preliminary conceptualizations were critically considered by participants.

Results: Participants relied on intuition and clinical expertise when making decisions, regardless of the length of their professional experience. Participants faced limited opportunities for continuing professional development, lack of research training programs, and reduced access to research knowledge and information about contemporary occupational therapy practice. To build knowledge, participants used personal and professional networks, trusting in the information available, which had variable quality.

Conclusions: Scarce access to sound knowledge, precarious development of research culture and reduced connection with the global scientific community can hamper EBP. Developing a clinical reasoning framework based on evidence and strengthening regulatory bodies and procedures could support quality practice of OTs in Chile.