

## The Development of International Research Priorities for Occupational Therapy

Liliana Alvarez<sup>3</sup>, WFOT, Lynette Mackenzie<sup>1</sup>, Susan Coppola<sup>2</sup>, , Ritchard Ledgerd<sup>4</sup>, Lolita Cibule<sup>5</sup>, Sue Baptiste<sup>6</sup>, Sergey Maltsev<sup>7</sup>, Siew Yim Loh<sup>8</sup>, Tecla Mlambo<sup>9</sup>, Zdenka Pihlar<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia, <sup>2</sup>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, USA, <sup>3</sup>Western University, London, Canada, <sup>4</sup>University College London, London, UK, <sup>5</sup>Riga Stradins University, Riga, Latvia, <sup>6</sup>McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada, <sup>7</sup>Russian Association of Occupational Therapists, Moscow, Russia, <sup>8</sup>University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, <sup>9</sup>University of Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe, <sup>10</sup>Institute for Rehabilitation, Ljubljana, Slovenia

**Introduction:** Occupational therapy addresses a range of health and social care issues that affect engagement in meaningful occupation. Diverse research activities are necessary to support the profession internationally.

**Objectives:** The aims of this project were to i) identify the current range of international research priorities relevant to occupational therapy, and ii) identify a list of international occupational therapy research priorities relevant across the membership of the World Federation of Occupational Therapists (WFOT).

**Method:** A newly established project group was convened at the 2014 WFOT Council meeting consisting of delegates from each continent represented within WFOT. Following ethics approval, a survey was distributed amongst the WFOT Member Organisations and WFOT approved educational programs to gather information about existing research priorities. These were coded and thematically analysed. A Delphi process, using two rounds, was implemented to reach consensus about occupational therapy research priority areas.

**Results:** Responses to the initial survey were received from 23 WFOT member organisations and 28 universities. Emerging research priority themes were: targeted areas of occupational therapy practice, outcome measurement and occupational therapy education, practice and professional issues. A total of 40 research priorities were identified and reduced to 8 final priorities.

**Conclusion:** The identification of research priorities for occupational therapy worldwide reflects the current research trends and future needs of the occupational therapy profession. A statement of research priorities will assist the WFOT to provide support to occupational therapists worldwide, and facilitate better research collaborations between WFOT members to increase the global visibility and contribution of occupational therapy.