

Occupational Therapy and Research



that has research and mentoring available in your specific field of interest, as much of your work as a scientist will start here.

- Many pursue a **post-doctoral fellowship** to gain additional experience and mentorship

Examples of Doctoral Programs Related to OT

- Disability Studies Education Health
- Administration
- Kinesiology
- Neuroscience
- Occupational Science
- Psychology
- Public Health
- Rehabilitation Science
- Social Work
- Special Education

Resources

For more information, please consult these resources:

Fellowships and Training

<http://aota.org/Educate/Researcher/Training.aspx>

AOTF's Doctoral Network

<http://www.aotf.org/programs/partnerships/oftheaotfinstitute/doctoralnetwork.aspx>

Case-Smith, J. (1999). Developing a research career: Advice from occupational therapy researchers. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 53(1), 44-50.

What is an Occupational Therapy Researcher?

An occupational therapy researcher is one who investigates to discover and interpret new knowledge, creates or revises theory based on findings, and applies and disseminates this knowledge with implications for practice.

Value to the Field

Researchers create the evidence needed to drive, sustain, and further the profession. Evidence informs best practice, best teaching, and best policy, now more than ever.

"Evidence-based information is critical to promoting an understanding of the full range and scope of occupational therapy. [Major payers] are going to be much more demanding of the profession for research that really confirms the role of occupational therapy [in] improving people's lives."

—Christina Metzler,
AOTA Chief Public Affairs Officer

What Researchers Do

Researchers do a variety of tasks:

- Write grant proposals
- Collaborate with other researchers and occupational therapists
- Design and conduct studies
- Establish intervention protocols
- Guide occupational therapy practice
- Present data and experimental outcomes
- Write journal articles

Personal Benefits to Being a Researcher

"I like being able to see how all the pieces fit together."

"The rewards are in the internal logic of research. I love to analyze the data. I love to collaborate ..."

"[Research] is like being a detective. It is tremendous fun to get to the answer" (Case-Smith, 1999).

Researchers can achieve personal benefits such as:

- Increased salary: experienced researchers can make > \$100,000
- Be on the cutting edge of evidence-based practice
- Flexibility in work schedule
- Challenging and rewarding work
- Publishing evidence that contributes to the field of occupational therapy
- Constantly learning and collaborating

The Educational Path

Although every educational program has different requirements, most researchers follow similar steps on their way to establishing a career.

- **Master of Science** in OT or related field. Some obtain a clinical doctorate in OT as well (OTD).
- **Related doctoral degree**, usually a PhD. It is important to find a doctorate program

