

This edition of the South African Journal of Occupational Therapy is the last edition that is under my guidance as editor. From the end of August Blanche Pretorius will take over as Editor in Chief of SAJOT.

The past 8 years as Editor of SAJOT have been a very rewarding second career for myself. The SAJOT editorial team consisting of Dain van der Reyden, Neeltje Smit, Therina Coetzee (who took over from Neeltje) and lately Blanche Pretorius and myself saw a few significant changes during this period, chief among them was the introduction of a web based management system ([www.sajot.co.za](http://www.sajot.co.za)). The journal also became posted on several scientific journal web sites such as EBSCO with the most important being accepted for membership of SciELO. The posting on SciELO has enabled access to the web of knowledge. This has also provided SAJOT with an impact factor. The team at the Scholarly Publishing Unit at ASSAF (Academy of Science of South Africa) provided immense support and continues to do so, to the editorial team in this process as well as getting the Journal on track with other important publishing criteria such as registering Digital Object Identifiers (DOI's).

One of the advances has been the increase in the number of articles published which has seen growth from a total of nine articles in 2009 to 28 in 2015. In the period 2010 -2015, seventy of the articles reported on quantitative research and sixty five on qualitative research. The increase in number of articles published is an indication of some growth in the research output among South African occupational therapists. However numbers do not reveal the quality and meaningfulness of the research. Sadly few of the articles can be used for evidence based practice. I sincerely hope that in the coming years the SAJOT will become a Journal well known for the scientific worth of its articles and that it will publish more research on the effectiveness of our interventions.

In this edition we continue to publish a small number of articles to celebrate the **40<sup>th</sup> University of the Occupational Therapy Department at the University of the Free State**. These articles have been identified with\*\*.

Article number one<sup>1</sup> in this edition of SAJOT explored the opinions of expert and experienced occupational therapists in the use of splints in adults with neurological injuries. Over the years the use of splints in the treatment of neurological injuries has evoked much discussion with opinions for and against its use. The authors of this research paper looked at what occupational therapists who were experienced in neurorehabilitation felt about this method of treatment. Using two case studies, this group of therapists was asked to discuss (within focus groups) the way in which they would deal with splinting in the two instances. The information was then categorised according to a priori themes. Sadly there is still a difference of opinion on how effective splinting can be and the type of splint best suited for neurological conditions. This may largely be due to that fact that no two patients present exactly the same combination of symptoms. Thus providing a splint for these patients has to be individualised.

Article two<sup>2</sup> is a comprehensive study of 53 stroke survivors that looks at the relationship between or possible causal relationship between impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions experienced by these stroke survivors. Standardised measurement tools were used to evaluate these stroke survivors, all of which revealed activity limitations in some form or another. Analysis of the test results found that there seemed to be a relationship between muscle strength and the ability to perform activities of daily living as well as a combination of perceptual and cognitive impairments negatively influencing a multitude of daily life problems

including shopping, cooking, working and social interaction. The authors noted that it is of concern that only one participant in their study had been formally tested with standardised assessment tools which could make it difficult to pinpoint the patient's problem. The authors recommend that all stroke survivors be routinely referred for cognitive and perceptual evaluations as well as that of motor impairments so that specific problems can be targeted in therapy.

The third article<sup>3</sup> tackles the problem of aggressive behaviour as one of the symptoms of conduct disorders that may be manifested in adolescent girls. The authors give a very comprehensive overview of the condition and use an innovative group "drumming" activity to try to influence their aggression positively. The fact that they use an experimental and a control group to try to monitor changes that take place in behaviour as a result of this activity is a very positive move as SAJOT has published few quantitative studies using this type of methodology. It is also interesting that the participants in the experimental group showed positive changes in their behaviour patterns after just 10 drumming sessions carried out over a three week period. It is hoped that this research will continue so that long term change can be monitored as a result of this activity and guidelines can be provided for other therapists to follow. This article makes a valuable contribution to outcome based research in occupational therapy.

The next article<sup>4</sup> describes the development of an Occupational Performance Questionnaire for pre-school children diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum disorder. It has already been mentioned that reliable and valid measures for determining the effectiveness of therapy with different conditions are extremely important and without these measures the effects of therapy cannot be accurately determined. These types of tools provide a more accurate way of providing feedback to the user of the service i.e. the patient. The work reported in this edition provides a well-researched assessment tool that looks at what the parents of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder receiving therapy, see as the changes and benefits to their child.

The use of Hippotherapy<sup>5</sup> by occupational therapists in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal is investigated in the fifth article. It seems that there is a renewed interest in this type of therapy although the multiple benefits of horse riding were demonstrated well before the 1980's when the first publications describing hippo-therapy as a therapeutic medium in occupational therapy appeared. The research reported on in this paper demonstrated that a high percentage of the therapists surveyed felt that hippo-therapy had much value as a therapeutic medium, however, there are several barriers to its use as reported in the article chief among them being the cost thereof.

The next article looks at the phenomenon of "school drop-out"<sup>6</sup>. The fact that many South Africa scholars drop out of school well before they have completed the education that will give them access to further study at tertiary institutions and therefore would enable them to obtain meaningful employment or indeed any type of employment is an indictment of our education system. This paper presents information gleaned from three respondents on their transition from school to other meaningful occupations. They found that "champions" played a significant role in helping school "drop-outs" to transition this period successfully. The way in which specific "champions" are identified and their roles determined has yet to be documented.

An article that investigates the role that the environment plays on the successful participation in the professional cycling of young

cyclists from disadvantaged areas, follows<sup>7</sup>. Although the author does not describe what part the occupational therapist can play in helping young cyclists to overcome the barriers that she describes it seems that there could be a role as an advisor consultant to organisations involved in this type of service to determine the factors, other than those related to fitness and training that could be dealt with to help young people maximise their opportunity.

An article covering the in-hand manipulation of six and seven year old children<sup>8</sup> is an extension of the data previously collected using the same test on five and six year old children<sup>9</sup>. This article therefore, extends to other age groups, the valuable information collected on normal hand function in children as well as providing a valuable measurement tool of hand function for paediatric therapists to use as a guide to practice.

The second last article<sup>10</sup> explores the educator's perceptions of the challenges and factors that can affect the academic performance of grade one learners, specifically in schools located in low socio-economic areas of the Western Cape. Sadly there are many obstacles to the learning in these schools such as language barriers (Afrikaans speaking children are sent by their families to English medium schools as English is seen as the language of opportunity), and the difficulties of obtaining assessments for children with problems so that early intervention can occur. One of the obstacles to learning is the fact that learners enter grade one at an early age as the parents cannot afford pre-school. The learners' therefore battle with learning material that is perhaps a little advanced for their developmental stage. This and the fact that classes are very large means that learners have difficulty in keeping up. It is hoped that the education department will examine the outcome of this research and attempt to make the necessary changes.

The last article<sup>11</sup> in this edition deals with an unusual field of research for occupational therapists i.e. the role of the occupational therapists in encouraging mothers to breast feed their babies. It is interesting to note that South Africa has the lowest rate for exclusive breast feeding in the world. Considering the part that good nutrition has to play in development as well as the role that exclusive breast feeding plays in the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus it is clearly important that we as occupational therapists are cognisant of the part that we can play within the multi-disciplinary team to improve the knowledge of mothers that will result in improved rates of breast feeding.

I take this opportunity to thank the editorial team of Dain van der Reyden, Tharina Coetzee and lately Blanche Pretorius for all the support and hard work that goes into producing a journal. I would also like to acknowledge the help received from Susan Veldsman (Director of the Scholarly Publishing Unit at ASSAF) and her team in getting SAJOT ready for the posting on SciELO. The support from Helen Buchanan (President of the South African Association of Occupational Therapists), Sylvia Birkhead (Editor of FOCUS and past Chair of Publications Committee) as well as from Gail Smith at Crown Publications was also very much appreciated. I wish Blanche Pretorius and the editorial committee great success in the coming years. I hope that you, the readers and researchers will continue to support the SAJOT and that the Journal will continue to go from strength to strength.

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\*\* Articles commemorating the UFS anniversary

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