Opportunities in Academia: What to Consider When You are Considering a Career in Research

Andrew Persch, PhD, OTR/L, BCP
The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH

Occupational therapy is commonly held in national “Top 10” lists of professions that are in the highest demand, and this demand is growing rapidly. Indeed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) estimated that the need for occupational therapy practitioners will increase 29% between 2012 and 2024. This growth trend makes occupational therapy an especially attractive option for students interested in health care and the helping professions. As such, the demand for occupational therapy education has also increased. Unfortunately, approximately 50% of occupational therapy faculty and 70% of programs do not plan to retire within the next 15 years (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2013). Accordingly, the need for doctoral-trained occupational therapy faculty is substantial. A quick glance at the job postings for faculty in the pages of OT Practice across this point. If you have ever considered a job as an occupational therapy educator and/or researcher, this article may help you refine your thinking and orient the next phase of your career.

OTD vs. PhD

One of the most common questions that prospective doctoral students consider is “Should I first an OTD or a PhD?” In such experiences, the answer depends on your current passions and aspirations. Simply put, the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) is an advanced, clinical degree for therapists who are interested in practicing occupational therapy in community settings. For these individuals, the OTD will offer advanced training and experiences that enable them to develop and implement effective tools, interventions, and programs. On the other hand, the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is a research degree intended for individuals who plan to conduct research in academic, governmental, and industry settings. PhD training programs also provide didactic and hands-on experiences in other skills important for an academic career, such as teaching, program management, and grant writing. Although many PhDs maintain clinical roles in the primary purpose of the degree is to produce new knowledge. As such, it is generally accepted that individuals who want to teach, conduct research, and lead independent research programs will be better served by the training offered within a comprehensive PhD program.

PHD or OTD or in a Related Field?

Very few universities offer a PhD in occupational therapy, so when checking out or calling these programs, the majority of occupational therapists choosing to pursue research do it in related fields. For example, consider Andrew Bracy’s PhD from the Ohio State University. In Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, and colleague Stephen Page PhD from the University of Tennessee, both have advanced training in disciplines that have an opinion that training in a discipline that leads into occupational therapy confers advantages over only training in occupational therapy, including exposure to a ground breadth of assessment and intervention techniques that are effectively and innovatively applied to occupational therapy skills. These skills are vital to conduct research and effectively care for clients. For example, occupational therapists such as Dena Ayres, Patricia Davies, Shelby Lane, and Bob Sandholtz completed PhDs in neuroscience and studied the neural mechanisms that underlie perceptuo-spatial functions. Other examples include Carolyn Baum, who completed her PhD in Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis, Wendy Gauer, who completed her PhD in...
Speaker

Andrew Persch, PhD, OTR/L, BCP
Chair-Elect, Special Interest Section Council, AOTA, 2016-2017
Assistant Professor, Division of Occupational Therapy, The Ohio State University

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@andypersch
facebook.com/andrew.persch
andrewpersch.com

VocFit.com
Systematic Job Matching

REHAB RECORD

The Ohio State University
Transition, Employment, & Technology Lab
Objectives

1. Describe need for faculty
2. Differentiate between PhD and OTD
3. Outline process for those considering a PhD
Study finds #occupationtherapy only spending category to reduce hospital readmissions buff.ly/2cYLMi

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY
Only Category That Reduces Hospital Readmissions

How Occupational Therapy Can Help Your RA Symptoms
Want to protect your joints and reduce RA pain? An occupational therapist can show you how.

Population changes up demand for occupational therapists

Lighten the Way: Occupational Therapists Fight Obesity
'A godsend': Meet Lori Rothman, the therapist who changed Al Roker's son's life

Lori Rothman knew she wanted to be an occupational therapist since she was in the seventh grade. In college, she worked with adolescents who had autism — long before autism was a well-known diagnosis.

Rothman was devoted to helping children with special needs reach their developmental milestones. She started working with Al Roker's 13-year-old son, Nick, when he was 3 — when he had problems many doubted he could overcome.

Pay It Forward: Al Roker honors his son's therapist
Following Up: Occupational Therapist Shortage
Occupational Therapists recommend special equipment, such as walkers.

27%

What Occupational Therapists Do
Occupational therapists treat injured, ill, or disabled patients through the therapeutic use of everyday activities. They help these patients develop, recover, and improve the skills needed for daily living and working.

Work Environment
About half of occupational therapists work in offices of occupational therapy or in hospitals. Others work in schools, nursing homes, and home health services. Therapists spend a lot of time on their feet while working with patients.

How to Become an Occupational Therapist
Occupational therapists typically have a master’s degree in occupational therapy. All states require occupational therapists to be licensed.

Pay
The median annual wage for occupational therapists was $80,150 in May 2015.

Job Outlook
Employment of occupational therapists is projected to grow 27 percent from 2014 to 2024, much faster than the average for all occupations. Occupational therapy will continue to be an important part of treatment for people with various illnesses and disabilities, such as Alzheimer’s disease, cerebral palsy, autism, or the loss of a limb.
Growth in OT Programs in Past 5 Years

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<th>OTM</th>
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## OT Faculty Retiring

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<th>2020-2024</th>
<th>2025-2029</th>
<th>2030-2034</th>
<th>2035 or later</th>
<th>Currently Retired</th>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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50%!
## OT Program Directors Retiring

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<th>Year</th>
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<th>2015-2019</th>
<th>2020-2024</th>
<th>2025-2029</th>
<th>2030-2034</th>
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<td>17%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>15%</td>
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</table>

*65%!*
Faculty Jobs

TOWSON UNIVERSITY
Assistant Professor
Department of Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science
College of Health Professions
CHP-N 3020
Towson, MD 21252

Assistant Professor
University of Florida
Department of Occupational Therapy

Instructor/Assistant Professor
University of Florida
College of Public Health and Health Professions

The Department of Occupational Therapy, College of Public Health and Health Professions at the University of Florida, invites applications for a full-time, 9-month, non-tenure track faculty position at the Clinical Instructor or Assistant Professor level. The successful candidate will engage in clinical practice, research, and/or education in the field of occupational therapy. Applicants should have a Master’s degree in Occupational Therapy or a Bachelor’s degree in Occupational Therapy and a minimum of one year of experience as an occupational therapist. Applicants must demonstrate a commitment to excellence in teaching and have adequate knowledge and skills in the area of occupational therapy. The University of Florida is an equal opportunity employer. Applications should be submitted online through the University of Florida’s Faculty Recruitment website.

TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY

VCU

Texas Women's University

Occupational Therapy Faculty Position

New faculty will join a department with a 40-year history of excellence.

Non-Tenure Track Position

Assistant Professor

Required Qualifications

Earned doctorate (e.g., OTD) or doctoral candidacy

Ability to complement and expand existing Departmental programs

Strong written and interpersonal communication skills

Commitment to excellence in teaching, research, and service

Preferred Qualifications

Experience in OTD education or related field

TSU OPPORTUNITIES

Open Positions

To Apply Visit:

www.tsu.edu/hr/employment.aspx

TSU OPPORTUNITIES

Open Positions

To Apply:

search Position 052650

The University of Central Arkansas

The Department of Occupational Therapy at the University of Central Arkansas invites applicants and nominations for two positions, Assistant Professor and Clinical Instructor. These are 9-month appointments beginning August 15, 2017.

The successful candidate(s) will have an earned doctorate degree in occupational therapy or related field; however, candidates with advanced degrees in related fields will also be considered. The successful candidate(s) will be expected to contribute to the occupational therapy program by teaching didactic courses, clinical experiences, and professional development activities. The successful candidate(s) will be expected to participate in research and service activities, as well as to develop a research agenda.

Applications are invited for full-time tenure-track faculty positions as an Assistant Professor. Successful applicants must provide evidence of: 1) research and/or scholarship; 2) clinical expertise in occupational therapy; 3) commitment to excellence in teaching; 4) evidence of effective communication skills; and 5) a commitment to diversity and inclusion. A complete application would include: (1) a letter of interest; (2) a curriculum vitae; (3) a statement of research and/or scholarship; (4) a statement of teaching philosophy; and (5) three letters of recommendation. Applications should be submitted online through the University of Central Arkansas’s Faculty Search website.
Academia Needs YOU!

What Should You Consider When Considering a PhD?

Andrew Persch
Stephen Page

Occupational therapy is consistently ranked in national “Top 10” lists of professions that are in the highest demand, and this demand is growing rapidly. Indeed, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) estimated that the need for occupational therapy practitioners will increase 27% between 2014 and 2024.

This growth trend makes occupational therapy an especially attractive option for students interested in health care and the helping professions. As such, the demand for occupational therapy education has also increased. Unfortunately, approximately 50% of occupational therapy faculty and 70% of program directors plan to retire within the next 15 years (American Occupational Therapy Association, 2013).

Accordingly, the need for doctoral trained occupational therapy faculty is substantial. A quick glance at the job postings for faculty in the pages of OT Practice proves this point. If you have ever considered a job as an occupational therapy educator and/or researcher, this article may help you refine your thinking and jumpstart the next phase of your career.

**OTD vs. PhD**

One of the most common questions that prospective doctoral students consider is “Should I get an OTD or PhD?” In our experience, the answer depends on your career goals and aspirations. Simply put, the Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) is an advanced clinical degree for therapists who are interested in practicing occupational therapy in community settings. For these individuals, the OTD will offer advanced training and experiences that enable them to develop and implement effective tools, interventions, and programs. In contrast, the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is a research degree intended for individuals who plan to conduct research in academic, governmental, and/or industry settings. PhD training programs also provide didactic and hands-on experiences in other skills important for an academic career, such as teaching techniques and grantmanship. Although many PhDs maintain clinical roles, the primary purpose of the PhD is to produce researchers, not clinicians. As such, it is generally accepted that individuals who want to teach, compete for funding, and lead independent research programs will be better served by the training offered within a competitive PhD program.

**PhD in OT or in a Related Field?**

Very few universities offer a PhD in occupational therapy (when checked last, the number was just three). As such, the majority of occupational therapists choosing to pursue research doctorates do so in related fields. For example, co-author Andrew Persch, PhD from The Ohio State University in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, and co-author Stephen Pages, PhD from the University of Tennessee is in Motor Behavior. It is our opinion that training in a discipline that is adjunctive to occupational therapy confers decided advantages over only training in occupational therapy, including exposure to a greater breadth of measurement and intervention techniques that can be effectively and innovatively applied to occupational therapy skills that enhance one’s ability to conduct research and effectively care for clients. For example, occupational therapists such as K. Jane Avery, Patrick Davis, Shelly Lane, and Bob Sandburg completed PhDs in neuroscience and studied the neural mechanisms that underlie sensorimotor function. Other examples include Carolyn Blum, who completed her PhD in Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis; Wendy Carter, who earned her PhD in Public Health from the University of Kansas, and then completed a residency at Hattiesburg, Mississippi; and Mark Fehlings, who earned his PhD in Rehabilitation Science at the University of Western Ontario.
Best Practices
HALF FULL

HALF EMPTY
Back to School
Differentiating OTD vs. PhD

Similarities
• Advanced degree
• Advanced skill
  • Teach in OT Programs
  • Entrepreneurship
  • Leadership
• Advocacy
• Scholarship

Differences
• Emphases
  • Clinical v. Research
• Life after
  • OTD primarily practice
  • PhD primarily research
• PhD necessary for “PI” status
  • Direct research
  • IRB
  • Submit grants
About the PhD...

• Who?
• What?
• Where?
• Why?
• When?
• How?
Discernment

• What does participation in the profession of occupational therapy mean to me?
• Why do I want to complete a PhD?
• Am I mobile (i.e., can I move to undertake doctoral training if necessary)?
• What area(s) of PhD training most interest me? Can they be effectively related to occupational therapy?
Discernment

• What financial resources am I able to leverage to support doctoral training?

• What will I be able to do after earning a PhD that I am not able to do now?

• Where do I want to work after earning a PhD? What are the expectations for that job?

• Am I committed to a career that may include in research?
My long-term goal is to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities by adapting, developing, and deploying systematic assessment and intervention techniques.
PhD in OT or a Related Field

• Very Few PhDs in OT
• Most OT faculty PhDs in related fields
  • Motor Control
  • Health and Rehabilitation Science
  • Educational Psychology
  • Neuroscience
  • Social Work

“Scholars like these strengthen the profession of occupational therapy when they leverage new knowledge and skills to conduct research that informs practice.”
Finding A Mentor Comes First

Shouldn’t I pick a program first?

• No!

“For most people, a PhD advisor/mentor will be like a second spouse, significant other, or best friend.”
How to find a PhD mentor

• Talk to friends, professors, and current mentors for suggestions.

• Review AOTA’s listing of post-professional programs.
Find a School

Looking for an occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant school? Browse our lists of schools.

Add your contact info to a mailing list to receive additional information about OT programs.

Accredited Entry-Level OT and OTA Programs

In order to be eligible to sit for the NBCOT certification examination, one must graduate from an ACOTE-accredited program.

- OT Doctoral-Level Programs - Accredited
- OT Master’s-Level Programs - Accredited
- OTA Programs - Accredited

Developing Programs (Step 2 of the Initial Accreditation Process)

New programs that are not yet accredited, but have completed the first steps in the 3-step initial accreditation process.

- OT Doctoral-Level Programs - Developing
- OT Master’s-Level Programs - Developing
- OTA Programs - Developing
There are no accredited entry-level occupational therapy or occupational therapy assistant educational programs that are offered in the online format. Some educational programs may offer some courses or parts of courses online, but there are no entry-level educational programs offered entirely online.

OT Programs Offering Distance Education Component - pdf, 121 kb
OTA Programs Offering Distance Education Component - pdf, 162 kb

Occupational Therapy Aide Programs

Prospective students should be aware that occupational therapy aide programs are not eligible for accreditation by the Accreditation Council for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) and a graduate of an occupational therapy aide program is not eligible to sit for the national exam to become certified as an occupational therapy assistant.

Occupational therapy aides are able to provide supportive services to the occupational therapist or occupational therapy assistant. To become an occupational therapy assistant, an individual would need to graduate from an ACOTE-accredited occupational therapy assistant program, pass the national certification exam administered by the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy, and attain licensure as required by the state.

Postprofessional OT Programs

For Current Occupational Therapists

Guide to Selecting a Postprofessional Education Program in OT

Postprofessional Programs in OT - Doctoral Level Programs
Postprofessional Programs in OT - Masters Degree Programs

Closed Programs

Closed OT and OTA Educational Programs Since 1990 - pdf, 36 kb
Ohio

The Ohio State University
Occupational Therapy Division
School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences
405 Neil Hall, 453 West Tenth Avenue
Columbus, OH 43210-1254
Phone: (614) 292-2624; Fax: (614) 292-0210
E-Mail: jane.case-smith@osumc.edu
Web site: www.medicine.osu.edu/ot; www.gradadmissions.osu.edu

Contact Person: Jane Case-Smith, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA, Division Director

Degree(s) Offered: PhD in Health and Rehabilitation Sciences

Major Area(s) of Study: Pediatrics, neuromotorrehabilitation, musculoskeletal, prevention, chronic disease management.

Area(s) of Concentration: Interdisciplinary studies with emphasis on research and university teaching.

Distance Learning Options: Not Available.

Admission Requirements: GRE, 3.0 or higher, recommended 3.5 or higher, an earned master's degree. International applicants and applicants who have held U.S., asylee, refugee or permanent resident status for less than one year must also provide a score on the paper-based TOEFL test, 79 on the Internet-based TOEFL or 7 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam.

Financial Aid: Loans and assistantships are available. Contact student Financial Aid (614) 292-0300 for loans. Contact Division for information on traineeships and assistantships.

Institutional Accreditor (Regional): The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association; http://www.ncahlc.org

Pennsylvania

Chatham University
Woodland Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15232-2828
Phone: (412) 367-1250; Fax: (412) 365-1609
E-Mail: admission@chatham.edu
Web site: www.chatham.edu/otd
How to find a PhD mentor

• Talk to friends, professors, and current mentors for suggestions.
• Review AOTA’s listing of post-professional programs.
• Cross-reference with:
  • US News and World Reports Rankings
  • Carnegie Classifications
Occupational Therapy

Ranked in 2016 | Occupational Therapy Rankings Methodology

Occupational therapists provide patients of all ages with therapeutic responses to physical ailments. They may work with injured patients, disabled children and aging adults. These are the top occupational therapy schools. Each school's score reflects its average rating on a scale from 1 (marginal) to 5 (outstanding), based on a survey of academics at peer institutions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
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<th>Score</th>
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<tr>
<td>#1</td>
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<td>Boston, MA</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Washington University in St. Louis</td>
<td>4.6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Louis, MO</td>
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<td>#3</td>
<td>University of Southern California</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>#4</td>
<td>University of Illinois—Chicago</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>University of Pittsburgh</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pittsburgh, PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Colorado State University</td>
<td>4.1</td>
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Doctorate-granting Universities [edit]

Doctorate-granting Universities are institutions that awarded at least 20 doctorates in 2013–14. The framework further classifies these universities by their level of research activity, as measured by research expenditures, number of research doctorates awarded, number of research-focused faculty, and other factors. A detailed list of schools can be found in the List of research universities in the United States.

- Doctoral Universities - Highest Research Activity (R1) (115)
- Doctoral Universities - Higher Research Activity (R2) (107)
- Doctoral Universities - Moderate Research Activity (R3) (113)

Master's Colleges and Universities [edit]

Master's Colleges and Universities are institutions that "awarded at least 50 master's degrees in 2013–14, but fewer than 20 doctorates."[5]

- Master's Colleges and Universities: Larger programs (M1) are larger programs that awarded at least 200 masters-level degrees (393)
- Master's Colleges and Universities: Medium programs (M2) are medium programs that awarded 100–199 masters-level degrees (207)
- Master's Colleges and Universities: Smaller programs (M3) are small programs that awarded 50-99 masters-level degrees (141)

Baccalaureate Colleges [edit]

Baccalaureate Colleges are institutions where "bachelor's degrees accounted for at least 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees and they awarded fewer than 50 master's degrees (2013–14-degree conferrals)."[6]

- Baccalaureate Colleges—Arts & Sciences (259)
- Baccalaureate Colleges—Diverse Fields (324)
- Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges: Associates Dominant (149)
- Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges: Mixed Baccalaureate/Associate's (259)

Associates Colleges [edit]

Associates Colleges are institutions whose highest degree is the associate degree, or bachelor's degrees account for fewer than 10 percent of all undergraduate degrees (2013–14-degree conferrals).

- Associate's Colleges: High Transfer - High Traditional (165)
- Associate's Colleges: High Transfer - Mixed Traditional/Nontraditional (127)
- Associate's Colleges: High Transfer - High Nontraditional (64)
How to find a PhD mentor

• Talk to friends, professors, and current mentors for suggestions.
• Review AOTA’s listing of post-professional programs.
• Cross-reference with:
  • US News and World Reports
  • Carnegie Classifications
• Consider additional related fields
• Research potential faculty mentors
# Types of Faculty

<table>
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<th>Type</th>
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<td>Adjunct</td>
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<tr>
<td>Full Professor</td>
<td>Senior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Mid-Career</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>N</td>
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Research potential faculty mentors

**What to review**
- CVs
- Publication history
- Funding history

**Where to find it**
- Program & faculty webpages
- Google scholar
- NIH RePORTER
- NARIC
- AHRQ
- CDC
- IES
Steve Page

OTR/L, PhD, MS, FAHA, FACRM, FAOTA

Overview
Associate Professor

443 Atwell Hall
453 W 10th Ave.
Columbus, OH 43210

Phone: 614-292-5490
Email: Stephen.Page@osumc.edu

Primary Professional Areas of Interest
- Neurorehabilitation
- Stroke
- Instrument development and testing
- Clinical trials
- Noninvasive brain stimulation

Research Focus
Dr. Page’s team develops and tests approaches that increase function and independence after stroke and other neurologic diseases. He has held uninterrupted extramural funding to support his rehabilitative trials for over 15 years, and has produced many "firsts" in neurorehabilitation, developing and showing efficacy of mental practice, portable robotics, modified constraint-induced therapy, functional electrical stimulation, brain stimulation in moderately impaired individuals, and several other innovative strategies in people with acquired brain injuries. This includes 8 NIH grants and 5 grants from the American Heart Association, as well as funding from multiple private organizations and subcontracts. He has also published well over 100 peer reviewed articles, and has served as guest issue editor for 14 special issues of rehabilitative and neurological journals since 2001, including The Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, The American Journal of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, and The Journal of Head Trauma Rehabilitation. He is a fellow of the American Heart Association, The American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine, and The American Occupational Therapy Association, and a standing panel member on NIH’s Function, Integration, and Rehabilitation Sciences Panel.
<table>
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<th>Title</th>
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<td>Mental practice in chronic stroke results of a randomized, placebo-controlled trial</td>
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<td>SJ Page, P Levine, A Leonard</td>
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<td>Stroke 38 (4), 1293-1297</td>
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<tr>
<td>A randomized efficacy and feasibility study of imagery in acute stroke</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>2001</td>
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<tr>
<td>SJ Page, P Levine, SA Sisto, MV Johnston</td>
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<td>Clinical rehabilitation 15 (3), 233-240</td>
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<td>Efficacy of modified constraint-induced movement therapy in chronic stroke: a single-blinded randomized controlled trial</td>
<td>324</td>
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<td>SJ Page, SA Sisto, P Levine, RE McGrath</td>
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<td>Archives of physical medicine and rehabilitation 85 (1), 14-18</td>
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<td>Mental practice combined with physical practice for upper-limb motor deficit in subacute stroke</td>
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<td>Physical Therapy 81 (8), 1455-1462</td>
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<td>Effects of mental practice on affected limb use and function in chronic stroke</td>
<td>234</td>
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<td>Archives of physical medicine and rehabilitation 86 (3), 396-402</td>
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<td>Stroke patients' and therapists' opinions of constraint-induced movement therapy</td>
<td>227</td>
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Note: RePORTER will be temporarily unavailable for system maintenance from 9 p.m. (ET) Saturday, November 19, until 8:30 a.m. (ET) Sunday, November 20. We apologize for any inconvenience.
How to find a PhD mentor

• Talk to friends, professors, and current mentors for suggestions.
• Review AOTA’s listing of post-professional programs.
• Cross-reference with:
  • US News and World Reports
  • Carnegie Classifications
• Consider additional related fields
• Research potential faculty mentors
• Filter
Filtering Your List of Potential Mentors

- Career stage, tenure, productivity
- Location
- Finances
- Family
- Other contextual factors

Your list of potential research mentor reflects:

1. your interests
2. potential mentors’ interests
3. potential mentors’ productivity
4. potential mentors’ ability to support a PhD student
5. personal characteristics/context
6. logistics
Connecting with Potential Mentors

• Reaching out to inquire about opportunities:
  • Phone
  • Email
  • Social media
  • In-person
  • At conferences

• Tailor your message to each individual
• Be specific
• Proofread
Dear Dr. Aaaa,

I am an occupational therapist from Bbbbbb and am writing to inquire about opportunities for doctoral level study at Ccccc. I became interested in the research process while completing a master’s thesis under the supervision of Dr. Dddd. This experience has led me to the goal of developing a career as a researcher and educator. Toward this end, I hope to pursue a research-based doctorate on a full-time basis. Following graduate study, my ultimate goal is to develop new lines of research that yield intervention strategies and assessment materials that support professionals serving Eeee.

I hope to begin a course of study within the next 18 months. As such, I am exploring doctoral programs and potential advisors that are a good match based on my research interests and career goals. I would appreciate the opportunity to discuss options for doctoral study at your institution. I have attached my curriculum vitae for your review. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Aspiring Researcher
Following-Up Initial Contact

How they respond provides clues:

1. general responsiveness to people they do not know
2. willingness to mentor PhD students
3. enthusiasm for engaging in discussions regarding doctoral study.

• OK to send one or two reminders to potential mentors, but not more than once per week
Prep Before Meeting Mentor

Whether on the phone, Skype, or in-person...

• learn as much as possible about that person and program
• prepare to ask good, thoughtful questions
• review potential mentors’ CVs again
• read their key articles
• look at anything else you can find online
Key Questions for Potential Mentors

• How long has the potential mentor been at their current institution? Are they tenured?
• How long has the PhD program been in existence? What are the program’s outcomes?
• How many PhD students has the potential mentor advised? What struggles/successes did they experience? What are those individuals doing now?
Key Questions for Potential Mentors

• What are the potential mentor’s current projects and how are they funded? How would a PhD student help support those projects?

• What is the potential mentor’s advising style? How do they like to work with students? Is their model more boss and employee, or peer to peer? How often do they meet with students?

• What other faculty should I talk to? What other projects might I be involved in?
Key Questions for Potential Mentors

• How long is the program? Do people sometimes complete their PhD more quickly or take longer?

• What teaching opportunities are available to PhD students? What opportunities are available to learn to teach more effectively?

• Will the potential mentor support students developing their own research and dissertation ideas, or do they expect students to complete dissertations in one of their project areas?

• What resources are available at the institution to support full-time study?

• Do clinician-students supplement their income by working PRN? Are there limits on this practice?
Follow-Up

• Follow up each interaction with a potential mentor with a message thanking that person for their time.

• It is helpful if you also include a summary of what was discussed during your call as well as an action plan for next steps.

• From here, things will become quite individualized.

• Do your best to be respectful and responsive to those you connect with.