The American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT) had a successful 2015. From September 2014 to September 2015, the number of manuscripts submitted had increased by 35%. Manuscripts were received from 23 countries, compared with 17 countries in 2014. AJOT continues to have the highest impact factor and to be the highest ranked of the occupational therapy journals listed in Journal Citation Reports. AJOT continues to focus on publishing research articles on aspects of occupational therapy among varied populations with diverse acute and chronic conditions. Additional changes for 2015 include new associate editors, a significantly enlarged pool of reviewers from across the globe, continuous publishing, pay-per-view, updated author guidelines, and the adoption of clinical trial registration requirements effective January 1, 2016.


As 2015 ends, AJOT remains a well-regarded occupational therapy and rehabilitation journal. It is the most highly ranked occupational therapy journal, according to Journal Citation Reports (JCR), and ranks 22nd out of 65 journals indexed in the Rehabilitation subsection of the Social Science Division of JCR on the basis of the 2-yr impact factor (1.532).

As shown in Table 1, manuscript submissions to AJOT continue to increase, and the acceptance rate also increased to 40.9% (103) out of 250 submissions. AJOT is truly a global publication, with manuscripts received from 23 countries (compared with 17 in 2014), including the United States, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China (mainland and Hong Kong), Greece, India, Iran, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Jersey, Korea, Norway, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa, and Spain.

2015 Article Statistics

The majority of articles published in AJOT continue to be research articles, consistent with the mission of the journal to be a primary outlet for the evidence that supports occupational therapy practice. Table 2 provides a breakdown of published research articles by type of study. This year, the definitions of these study types were altered to reflect the great variety of studies that have been submitted to the journal and to attempt to eliminate some of the overlap among categories.

- **Effectiveness** studies examine the effects, efficacy, or effectiveness of a therapy intervention or educational pedagogy and range from case studies or other N-of-1 trials to large randomized controlled trials.

- **Instrument development** studies are those that involve the development of assessment tools or therapy tools (e.g., new technology) and include studies about tool construction, psychometric properties, and ease of use.

- **Basic research** studies establish relationships between conditions and occupational limitations, determine the prevalence or incidence of conditions or client factors within a condition, determine predictors of outcomes, develop taxonomies, and test and build theories. They also include occupational science and research with animal models.

- **Professional issues** studies assess therapist knowledge or skills and examine practices that affect therapy delivery.

- **Health services** studies describe health care practice and utilization of occupational therapy services, disparities in utilization of health care services, and access to health care services.
• **Systematic reviews** include literature reviews, meta-analyses, and scoping reviews that use systematic methods to locate and select appropriate literature and critique the literature.

The greatest proportion of articles published in *AJOT* in 2015 describe effectiveness and basic research studies supporting occupational therapy intervention. This statistic is in keeping with the journal’s mission to be one of the primary outlets for dissemination of evidence for occupational therapy practice and is encouraging because the profession is in critical need of evidence to support the efficacy and effectiveness of occupational therapy interventions for its stakeholders (i.e., clients and families, insurers, legislators, and other health professionals). However, caution is warranted: More than 65% of effectiveness studies (*n* = 25) were at the lower levels of evidence, in which the risk of bias is relatively high. Of the 34.2% of effectiveness studies at Level I (*n* = 13), in which risk of bias is reduced, only 4 were randomized clinical trials; the remainder were systematic reviews.

Of concern is that these statistics indicate either that insufficient Level I occupational therapy intervention effectiveness studies are being conducted or that such studies are being published in journals other than *AJOT*. Although publication in other professions’ journals or interdisciplinary journals is important exposure for occupational therapy, publication in occupational therapy journals drives other professionals and researchers to access occupational therapy literature and emphasizes the uniqueness of occupational therapy in solving the problems of people with disabilities or other conditions.

In 2015, the most commonly addressed practice areas in research articles were (1) rehabilitation, disability, and participation and (2) children and youth (see Table 2). Other practice areas were not well represented, although several articles could have been dually categorized. For example, articles by Hildebrand (2015) and Bixby, Davis, and Ott (2015) were categorized as rehabilitation, disability, and participation but could also have been placed into the mental health and productive aging categories, respectively. This year, the second year of the education supplement, saw an increase in the number of unsolicited education research articles submitted.

Twenty-eight (28.8%) of the 97 research articles were funded by specific funding mechanisms in 2015 (Table 3). We saw a small increase in federally funded research, which suggests that occupational therapy researchers are increasingly funded by some of the most competitive research grants in the United States. However, the small number of “other federal agency”–funded research articles suggests that researchers are not taking advantage of some excellent funding mechanisms, such as those of the Department of Veterans Affairs and the National Science Foundation.

### Table 2. Research Type, Practice Area, and Level of Evidence: *AJOT* Research Articles, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total no. of published research studies&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>No. of published research studies&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research type</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument development</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic research</td>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional issues</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systematic reviews</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scoping review</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Practice area</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation, disability, and participation</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children and youth</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td>35.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productive aging</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work and industry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health, wellness, occupation, and participation</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional issues</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational science</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** *AJOT* = American Journal of Occupational Therapy.

<sup>a</sup>Levels based on Lieberman & Scheer, 2002. <sup>b</sup>Studies include systematic reviews of effectiveness studies and clinical trials but not scoping reviews.

### Table 1. *AJOT* Acceptance Rate and Total Publications, 2010–September 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total submissions&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepted, n (%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>103 (40.8)</td>
<td>80 (37.6)</td>
<td>70 (34.8)</td>
<td>92 (39.3)</td>
<td>72 (35.3)</td>
<td>79 (33.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejected, n (%)&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>98 (39.2)</td>
<td>133 (55.4)</td>
<td>131 (65.2)</td>
<td>142 (60.7)</td>
<td>132 (64.7)</td>
<td>160 (66.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total no. of published research studies&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** AJOT = American Journal of Occupational Therapy.

<sup>a</sup>Statistics for 2015 are through September 18, 2015. Previous years’ statistics are for the full calendar year. <sup>b</sup>Reflects published articles through the November/December 2015 issue. Does not include AJOT Supplement 3, which contains the AOTA official documents.
addition, few articles were funded by U.S.
foundations, another excellent source of
research funding. It is likely that health care
reforms that emphasize the importance of
distal health outcomes, such as participation,
healthy life habits for managing chronic
conditions, and life satisfaction, will drive
funders to increasingly value the importance
of developing effective occupational therapy
interventions that support these outcomes.
Therefore, occupational therapy researchers
should see even greater amounts of federally
funded research awards in the next several
years.

Accomplishments

In keeping with the goals of increasing the
quality and quantity of articles published
and improving the visibility of occupational
therapy research, we can point to the
following accomplishments since the start
of 2015:

- Sixty-nine reviewers were added to the
roster of AJOT reviewers, including re-
viewers from Canada, the United King-
dom, Australia, and several Asian
countries. In general, this increase has
cased reviewer workload and shortened the
review process.

- The AJOT Editorial Board held a
workshop at the American Occupational
Therapy Association (AOTA) Annual
Conference & Expo in Nashville to pro-
vide potential authors with information
about the publishing process and tips for
higher quality writing. The goal was to
foster the submission of manuscripts that
need less revision before publication.

- The AJOT Editorial Board agreed to
adopt additional publishing guidelines:
STROBE (von Elm et al., 2007) for
cohort and case-controlled studies and
STARD (Bossuyt et al., 2003) for diag-
nostic accuracy.

- AJOT has joined other major rehabili-
tation and disability journals in a col-
aborative initiative to enhance clinical
research reporting standards through
adoption of mandatory reporting guide-
lines (Chan, Heinemann, & Roberts,
2014). As a result, effective January 1,
2016, authors of manuscripts reporting
on clinical trials must register those trials
with ClinicalTrials.gov or a similar non-
U.S. registry for the manuscript to be
considered for publication. Registering
trials on such sites increases the transpar-
ency of trial design and implementation,
resulting in less risk of bias and higher
quality evidence. The editorial collabora-

tive believes that the adoption of such
requirements will hasten an increase in
the quality of rehabilitation and related
research. Additional information is
available in the most recent AJOT au-

tor guidelines (AOTA, 2015), avail-
able at http://ajot.aota.org/article.aspx?
articleid=2442689.

- AJOT moved to continuous publishing
this year. Articles are now published on-
line as soon as production activities are
completed, which is typically months
sooner than the article is available in
print format.

- As this article went to press, AJOT was
implementing a pay-per-article option
so that people without a subscription
can still access articles. Increased access
to AJOT articles is intended to widen the
scope of readership and facilitate in-
creased citations.

- AJOT introduced an immediate open
access option whereby authors may
pay a fee to publish their articles in an
open-access format. Most AJOT articles
are available only to subscribers and
AOTA members for the first 5 years
after publication.

- AJOT published three special issues
in 2015: one on occupational therapy
and stroke, one on autism, and a special
issue honoring the legacy of Jane Case-

Smith. Two of these special issues were
a collaboration between AJOT and
AOTA’s Evidence-Based Practice Pro-
ject (Lieberman & Scheer, 2002). In
addition, AJOT published three online
supplements. Supplement 1 contains the
research abstracts from the 2015 AOTA
Annual Conference & Expo, a new
feature that is intended to further dissem-
inate the research presented at the con-
ference and help increase the research
profile of the profession. Supplement 2
is the second edition of the special issue
on occupational therapy education, and
Supplement 3 is the annual AOTA offi-
cial documents supplement.

Concerns and Recommendations

AJOT’s goal is to remain the premier re-
search journal for the occupational therapy
profession and to increase the relevance
of occupational therapy literature for other
related professions and researchers. To
maintain this status, AJOT is using several
strategies.

First, despite AJOT continuing to be
the top-ranked occupational therapy jour-

dl, its 2014 impact factor declined slightly
from its 2013 level (Table 4). A journal’s

Table 3. Funding of AJOT Research Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Source</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Institutes of Health</td>
<td>15 (53.6)</td>
<td>13 (39.4)</td>
<td>6 (18.8)</td>
<td>12 (29.3)</td>
<td>11 (33.3)</td>
<td>6 (16.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other federal agency</td>
<td>2 (7.1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>3 (9.4)</td>
<td>9 (22.0)</td>
<td>4 (12.1)</td>
<td>2 (5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. state agency</td>
<td>2 (7.1)</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>2 (6.3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1 (2.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. foundation</td>
<td>5 (17.9)</td>
<td>10 (30.3)</td>
<td>6 (18.8)</td>
<td>10 (24.4)</td>
<td>10 (30.3)</td>
<td>4 (10.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. university</td>
<td>4 (14.3)</td>
<td>1 (3.0)</td>
<td>4 (12.5)</td>
<td>3 (7.3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4 (10.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. doctoral scholarship</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (3.0)</td>
<td>2 (6.3)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2 (6.1)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International source</td>
<td>6 (21.4)</td>
<td>6 (18.2)</td>
<td>9 (28.1)</td>
<td>7 (17.1)</td>
<td>10 (30.3)</td>
<td>20 (54.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>0 (0)</td>
<td>1 (3.0)</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Some studies may have more than one source of funding. AJOT = American Journal of Occupational Therapy; — = not applicable.
impact factor is based on the number of research articles published that are cited in other indexed journals and is also dependent on the total number of research articles published in a volume. To achieve the goal of increasing AJOT’s impact factor to at least 2, we are taking the following approach:

- Continue to focus on high-quality studies that are more likely to be cited by other authors, including systematic reviews on topics relevant to occupational therapy
- Encourage submission of manuscripts describing research in new and underrepresented areas of practice in the literature, such as primary care and mental health
- Solicit manuscripts from studies with a low risk of bias (Level I evidence methodology) from researchers known to be conducting such studies
- Publish a greater number of articles. Because the number of articles that can be published in AJOT is limited by the costs of print publication, this will be accomplished by placing more articles online and requiring shorter articles.

Another way of raising AJOT’s profile is by asking AJOT authors to refrain from emphasizing the occupational therapy profession and its role in their manuscripts. In doing so, the articles, and occupational therapy, are more likely to be of interest to researchers and practitioners in other professions. The fact of being published in an occupational therapy journal advertises the relevance of an article’s topic to occupational therapy, so authors should focus on the topic’s relevance to occupational engagement. For example, a manuscript about the efficacy of sleep hygiene for obtaining quality sleep should talk only about sleep hygiene and not why occupational therapy practitioners should be involved in teaching sleep hygiene habits.

Two exceptions to this general rule are made. The first is that the section “Implications for Occupational Therapy Practice” will continue to appear at the end of each research article. This section allows authors to specifically link the topic of the manuscript to the occupational therapy profession. The second exception occurs for manuscripts whose topic is the profession of occupational therapy itself, describing the behavior, knowledge, or skills of occupational therapy practitioners or occupational therapy pedagogy. AJOT reviewers are being educated about this mandate so that they do not ask authors to tie the article directly to the occupational therapy profession in the body of the manuscript.

Other steps rounding out the effort to raise AJOT’s profile include encouraging researchers in other disciplines of relevance to occupational therapy to submit to AJOT. In addition, AJOT will continue to publish special issues on critical topics in occupational therapy and in collaboration with AOTA’s Evidence-Based Practice Project.

Conclusion
An important opportunity for the journal is the occupational therapy profession’s centennial in 2017. AJOT needs to reflect this important occasion for the profession; therefore, the AJOT Editorial Board will be planning AJOT’s contributions to the celebration. Members of the profession and others with interesting ideas are welcome to submit their ideas to AJOT’s editor-in-chief at lorie.richards@hsc.utah.edu.

Acknowledgments
Changes to the AJOT Editorial Board in the past year included Susan Murphy, MJ Mulcahey, and Ashwini Rao stepping down as Associate Editors and the addition of Stephen Page, Lisa Daunhauer, and Tracey Jirikowic in those roles. AOTA staff and I extend our thanks to all the associate editors for the hours of dedicated service they have devoted to AJOT. We also thank the reviewers who have taken the time to provide their valuable feedback to authors submitting manuscripts to AJOT.

Table 4. AJOT Impact Factor (IF), 2004–2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2-Yr IF</th>
<th>5-Yr IF</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>1.532</td>
<td>1.722</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>1.552</td>
<td>1.831</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>1.471</td>
<td>2.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>1.697</td>
<td>2.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>1.672</td>
<td>1.806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>1.419</td>
<td>1.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>0.921</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>0.673</td>
<td>0.971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>0.713</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>0.634</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>0.676</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. AJOT = American Journal of Occupational Therapy; NA = not available.

References


