A Research Primer in Occupational and Physical Therapy

Charlotte Brasic Royeen, PhD, OTR, FAOTA (1997).
American Occupational Therapy Association, Inc., 4720 Montgomery Lane, PO Box 31220, Bethesda, MD 20824-1220. 353 pp., $45.00, ISBN 1-56900-063-8

This book is intended as an introductory research text for students or clinicians with little knowledge of research or who are intimidated by the research process. Thus, the content of the book is not new, in fact, for the researcher, it is superficial. However, for those individuals for whom it is designed, it is a unique, friendly, and functional text. Specifically, the goals of this primer, as stated by the author, are to (a) read research, (b) understand the role and “culture” of research, and (c) use or apply research.

The text is written in first person and is almost “conversational” in style. The beginning chapters are “ice breakers” into the world of research, and the author takes a step-by-step approach. Each chapter has a topical outline and a list of key words, and most have activities at the end designed to reinforce learning. Readers may get a sense of the author standing over their shoulder, helping them along the road to success.

One unique aspect about this text is the integration of research papers within the chapters. The majority of chapters have one or more actual published papers that exemplify the concepts described in the chapter. The immediate ability to apply the information to the “real world” of research goes a long way to help novice research readers apply the information. Further, the author has formulated 20 common-sense evaluation questions that are presented first for the reader to use to analyze the reading and then the answers are given for feedback on his or her analysis. However, some of the papers include details or concepts that are not fully explained in the text, which may be frustrating for some readers. There also may be a tendency for readers to avoid reading the illustrated papers and, thus, miss the content that the papers are trying to reinforce.

The flow of topics is well designed and is explained at the beginning levels of knowledge. The chapters on the types of research are at the introductory level and have good application articles and exercises. Although qualitative research is included, the text has a definite quantitative emphasis.

The best part of this text is the last chapter. The author outlines very specific action plans for the research consumer and for further developments in research and scholarly activity. I found these action plans to be varied, on a developmental continuum, and the early ones structured enough to be carried out by even the beginning research consumer.

In sum, while not a primer designed for the individual who is designing and implementing an actual research project, this is a wonderful text that will introduce research to the student or clinician who want to begin to understand research findings in a manner that is enjoyable, manageable, and user friendly.

Anne E. Dickerson, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA

Assessment in Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy

Julia Van Deusen, PhD, OTR, FAOTA, and Denis Brunt, PT, EdD (1996).

This text provides comprehensive information regarding assessment and measurement applicable to both occupational therapists and physical therapists. Essential information is provided for establishing interdisciplinary collaboration, which is critical in providing quality care. It can assist in making sound clinical decisions and quantifying effectiveness of care. The book is divided into five units: Overview and Measurement Theory, Component Assessments of the Adult, Assessment of Central Nervous System Function of the Adult, Age-Related Assessment, and Assessments of Activities of Daily Living. The chapters are written by experts in each content area who summarize the chapter, present the material, and then provide a glossary of terms at the conclusion of the chapter. Tables, figures, and charts are used effectively in clarifying the content for easy review. In addition, some of authors provide supplemental materials in appendices at the conclusion of the chapter. References are comprehensive and thorough.

Strengths of the text include its clarity and readability. It is comprehensive in its approach to assessment and uses pertinent examples to illustrate concepts presented. Most chapters describe current assessment methods for the specified area, discussing research of selected instruments and the strengths and limitations of the tools. When possible, samples of the assessments and forms used in documenting assessment results are provided. Some of the chapters use case studies to illustrate application of the materials presented. Within the text there is some repetition noted among chapters. This repetition is controlled and reduces the time needed to secure information about specific content areas.

One problem with the breadth of information presented is that some of the areas are not addressed in the same depth as other areas. For example, the unit on age-related assessment reviews pediatric assessments and assessments of elders and care givers but does not discuss other life stages. Other weaknesses of the text include inconsistency among authors in identifying sources for obtaining assessments not published in journal articles and lack of specificity in referencing the reader to information described in other sections of the text.

This text was designed for graduate students but could be equally useful to the experienced clinician as a reference and in identifying assessment information. Some of the content is not as applicable to both occupational therapists and physical therapists, but overall the text provides basic information that will enhance the knowledge base of both professions and reinforce the interdisciplinary approach to treatment.

Janet S. Jedlicka, PhD, OTR/L

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