

Research Guide: recruiting RCOT members as research participants

Introduction

As the UK professional body for occupational therapists, we often receive enquiries about recruiting our members as research participants. In line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, and in the best interest of our members, we can't give permission to researchers to use our data sources to directly contact members with research recruitment information.

However, there are other options for alerting our members to research recruitment opportunities, though whether it is possible and the process will depend on whether you are an RCOT member or not:

- [RCOT Communities](#) (option for members and non-members)
- [OTnews](#) (option for members only)

If you are considering using any of these options as a research recruitment strategy, you should be aware of the potential limitations. Don't use these options as your primary means of recruiting research participants, as it could leave your project vulnerable:

- These options are discretionary, and acceptance of your request can't be guaranteed.
- The recruitment timescales for your research project may not fit with the dates when information can be disseminated, for example, in a particular issue of OTnews
- As an opportunistic sampling method, it's not possible to accurately predict how many RCOT members will see or access the information.
- Response rates may be low.

We only allow research recruitment for studies that have ethics approval. You can find guidance on research ethics [here](#).

RCOT Communities

RCOT Communities is our online engagement platform. All members have access to the full range of practice, professional and regional networks as a member benefit.

If you are an RCOT member, you can post recruitment notices in up to two networks. Think about which networks will have the most relevant audience for your request. If you don't think there is a relevant network, Research Connect, our online community for all things research-related, maybe best. Please ensure your post includes your ethics approval number and the institution that approved it, and that it is clearly labelled as a research recruitment request.

We also encourage you to follow up on your post with an update of the outcome of your study. It's likely those who've volunteered their time to participate will have an interest in your research and its outcomes. It's also a good way to help others who might have overlapping research interests or might be interested in using a similar methodology. Think about answering:

- What did you do?
- What are your key findings?
- What went well?
- Were there any particular challenges?
- Can you signpost to outputs?

If you aren't an RCOT member, we have Research and Innovation Leads who can choose to share research opportunities with their respective networks on the Communities platform. We can pass along details of your research and then it's over to the Leads to share as appropriate.

Before we do this, however, you will need to supply your ethics reference and the institution that provided it.

OTnews

If you are an RCOT member, you can make a request for research recruitment information to be included in the 'Professional Resources' section of OTnews, our monthly magazine sent that is sent to members. To do this you need to complete an 'OTnews – Research recruitment request form', available [here](#), and send it to the OTnews editor.

Please note, you can only send a request to include recruitment information in the magazine once you have ethics approval for your study.

Unfortunately, the editor can't guarantee publication as inclusion depends on factors such as available space in any given month, advertising pressures and number of requests.

Timescales for your recruitment are also an issue to consider. In line with most publications, there can be a delay of a minimum of six weeks between a request being submitted and it reaching the reader.

If you aren't an RCOT member, OTnews is not available as a recruitment strategy.