

Research Guide: recruiting occupational therapists as research participants

Introduction

As the professional body for occupational therapists in the United Kingdom, the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) often receives 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 RCOT members to research recruitment opportunities through:

- RCOT branches (Specialist Sections/regional groups).
- OTnews.
- RCOT social media.

If you are considering using any of these options as a research recruitment strategy, you should be aware of 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 or Specialist Section e-newsletter.
- 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.

RCOT branches (Specialist Sections/regional groups):

Contacting occupational therapists working in a particular specialty through one of our Specialist Sections can be a valuable way to reach people to take part in your research, and regional groups can be useful for contacting members within a specific area of the UK.

Any enquiries we receive are normally signposted to the relevant RCOT branch(s). Researchers can also approach the Chair or R&D lead of the RCOT branch directly to see if they can assist with your request. RCOT branches will decide if they are able to provide support or not. They may have their own criteria in terms of who they are able to assist (such as whether you are a member of the Specialist Section/post-graduate researcher, or whether the research addresses questions that are a research priority). Our branch committee members are volunteers, and they may not be able to support your request due to the volume of work.

Membership lists can't be shared, but RCOT branches may be able to alert their members to opportunities to take part in studies by highlighting the opportunity in an e-newsletter.

You can find out more about our Specialist Sections [here](#) and our regional groups [here](#) .

OTnews

RCOT members 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 at: www.rcot.co.uk/news/otnews 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 is dependent 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 printed publications, there can be a delay of a minimum of six weeks between a request being submitted and it reaching the reader.

RCOT social media

RCOT members can post a message in the members-only LinkedIn group. The post should provide concise, relevant information about the study, and details of ethics approval (such as the name of the ethics approval committee, review reference number and date of approval).

Inappropriate or inadequate communications will be removed by our RCOT Digital Marketing Executive, in line with the [RCOT's website terms and conditions](#).

Please note, RCOT does not post research recruitment requests directly to either the @theRCOT Twitter account or @theRCOT Facebook page.

Researchers can use their own Twitter accounts to raise awareness of their project by tagging @theRCOT.