

8-6-2023

## Clinical Research Capstone at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center

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### NSUWorks Citation

Deborah J. Kofsky. 2023. *Clinical Research Capstone at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center*. Capstone. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from NSUWorks, . (114)  
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Leslie Bardin, OTR/L, CLT, NIH Clinical Center

## Introduction

My intention for the capstone project is to pursue a deeper understanding of producing clinical research for occupational therapy (OT).

I completed my capstone experience at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) where I participated in a scoping review as well as a retrospective cross-sectional study, both focused on the intersex population. I also engaged in cotreatment for patient care including exposure to lymphedema therapy.

My intention in gaining exposure to clinical research was to make myself a better consumer of research as an occupational therapist and potentially foster opportunities to contribute to research throughout my career.

## Site Description

The National Institutes of Health Clinical Center has 200 inpatient beds and 93 day-hospital stations. As a research facility, only patients with the specific illness or stage under investigation are admitted for treatment.

In addition to collaborating on research initiatives with science and nursing, occupational therapists at the NIH have a role in raising awareness of the role and benefits of OT among the scientific community.



From <https://www.cc.nih.gov/welcome.html>

## Summary of Needs Assessment

Participating in research is important for the furtherment of ideas within and beyond the OT profession.

Understanding how to produce and consume research helps to support initiatives to promote the benefits of OT services across settings.

Exposure to and involvement in clinical research will lead to becoming a better consumer of research as a clinician.

This may also lead toward developing a professional identity of clinician-researcher, supporting future roles as a clinician, researcher, advocate, educator, and leader.

## Literature Review Summary

### Reimbursement

- OT as a profession must produce and use additional research to remain relevant (Di Bona et al., 2017; Lamb & Metzler, 2014; Pitout, 2014; Rogers et al., 2017).
- Research in OT can assist with advocacy efforts for reimbursement of OT services in areas with demonstrated effectiveness and the expansion of research will lead to the expansion of opportunities for occupational therapists (Lamb & Metzler, 2014).

### Research Translation Gaps

- There is a disconnect between research and clinical practice that needs to be addressed through effective knowledge translation (Bennett et al., 2016; Eriksson et al., 2017; Hu, 2012; Juckett et al., 2022; Pitout, 2014).

### Barriers to Research

- Research involvement among occupational therapists exists on a spectrum from consumption to production with few occupational therapists involved in producing research (Cusick, 2001; Hu, 2012; Pighills et al., 2013).
- Many occupational therapists are interested in research but not involved due to barriers including time, lack of support or confidence, and anxiety around conducting research (Hu 2012; Pitout, 2014).

## Capstone Project Description

### Retrospective Cross-Sectional Study

- Scored assessments which were previously completed including the Beck Depression Inventory – II (BDI-II) Occupational Self Assessment (OSA), Occupational Performance History Interview – II (OPHI-II), and the Occupational Performance Inventory of Sexuality and Intimacy (OPISI).
- Organized deidentified patient data into a spreadsheet for analysis.
- Attended relevant NIH Library education events to strengthen research skills.
- Conducted a literature review and began manuscript
- Concluded that more data collection is needed before proceeding

### Subject Competencies

- Educated myself on sexuality and intimacy in OT as it was related to the dimensions of a research protocol my mentor evaluates.
- Educated myself through reading the book Sexuality and Intimacy: An Occupational Therapy Approach and listening to OT After Dark podcast
- Joined an Australian sexuality Special Interest Group

### Scoping Review

- Wrote a scoping review protocol and register with Open Science Framework: "An Occupational Perspective of Health for the Intersex Population: A Scoping Review"
- Collaborated with experts and stakeholders such as a librarian, representatives from InterConnect (an intersex support group), a physician who works with the population, and other researchers at NIH who have completed scoping reviews.
- Attended training events by NIH Library to strengthen research skills.
- Completed search, title and abstract review, and full text review using Covidence.
- Began data extraction and will continue beyond capstone.

### Clinical Practice Skills

- Gained exposure to lymphedema therapy through my mentor who is a Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT) and collaborations with other CLTs and garment vendors.
- Developed an interest in pursuing becoming a CLT in the future.

## Becoming a Clinician-Researcher

## Learning Objectives Achieved

- Participated in a scoping review of individuals with intersex variations and psychosocial stressors using an Occupational Perspective of Health framework.
  - Completed article search in collaboration with library
  - Used Covidence for article selection and extraction
- Participated in data review for retrospective cross-sectional study involving seven patients in the intersex population
  - Organized existing data including scoring assessments and transcribing into deidentified spreadsheet.
  - Conducted literature review.
  - Determination was made that more data is needed to continue this study and this research was postponed.
- Developed personal competencies in subject matter content
  - The unique psychosocial needs of the intersex population
  - How OT can address sexuality and intimacy
- Gained exposure to lymphedema therapy with several clinical center patients.
- Met overall objective of gaining experience in clinical research.

## Implications of Capstone

Scoping review will establish the role of occupational therapy in addressing psychosocial well-being among individuals with intersex variations.

Producing occupational therapy literature in this area could support advocacy efforts leading to increased reimbursement.

Becoming a clinician-researcher will allow me to further the occupational therapy profession overall.

Through gaining experience as a researcher, I will be a better consumer of research with a commitment to evidence-based practice.

## References & Acknowledgements

I am extremely grateful to Leslie Bardin, OTR/L, CLT, for her mentorship throughout this experience and helping to facilitate a quick onboarding. I would also like to thank Bonnie Hodsdon, OTR/L, Chief of the OT Section of RMD for facilitating my capstone and for her leadership. I extend my gratitude to the OT section and RMD for welcoming me during this experience. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Christina Kane, EdD, MS, OTR/L for her ongoing support during this project including facilitating the transition to NIH and serving as a mentor in the first month of the capstone experience, as well as Dr. Thomas Decker, EdD, OTD, OTR/L for serving as a mentor during the first month of my capstone.

References available upon request.



From <https://www.cc.nih.gov/>