



Call for Papers

Occupational Therapy and Mental Health Needs of Autistic Clients

Guest Editors: Claudia Hilton, PhD, OTR, MBA, FAOTA; Anne Kirby PhD, OTR/L

Occupational therapists frequently collaborate with individuals on the autism spectrum across the lifespan to address functional goals and valued occupations. Recent surveys and listening sessions with autistic individuals have identified mental health as a priority area for the autistic community. This special issue of the *American Journal of Occupational Therapy (AJOT)* will highlight the needs of the autism community with regard to mental health services and the role occupational therapists can play in addressing those needs. This issue especially seeks findings from empirical studies, systematic reviews, or meta-analyses that can be used to inform occupational therapy practice or policymaking decisions. Papers on the following topics are prioritized for this issue:

1. Occupation-based mental health interventions for autistic children, adolescents, and adults

Examples:

- Studies on interventions to reduce anxiety or depression in autistic individuals
- Studies on how existing interventions can be adapted to meet the needs of the autistic community
- Studies on how to address trauma in autistic individuals
- Studies on interventions improving quality of life or social well-being in autistic individuals.

2. Evaluation and measurement of mental health outcomes in practice

Examples:

- Studies on the development and validation of mental health outcomes across the lifespan
- Studies related to improvements in measurement of quality of life, social well-being, sleep, and other outcomes in autistic individuals.

3. Understanding the experience of mental health issues for autistic individuals

Examples:

- Studies on the impact of social isolation, stigma, and discrimination on mental health and well-being
- Studies on the experience of autistic individuals during participation in meaningful activities and the impact on mental health or well-being.

4. Impact of policies and service delivery on mental health and social outcomes

- Studies examining how service delivery models or environments can be improved or adapted
- Studies on educational or employment supports and associations with mental health or well-being
- Studies on societal approaches for inclusion, acceptance, and suicide prevention.

Authors considering a submission should first contact Claudia Hilton (clhilton@utmb.edu) or Anne Kirby (anne.kirby@hsc.utah.edu) to discuss their interest. Submitted manuscripts will be peer-reviewed and must conform to the criteria specified in the current "Guidelines for Contributors to AJOT" (available on the AJOT website, <https://ajot.aota.org>). Papers will be reviewed and accepted or rejected based on the merit of the paper and the fit with the special issue focus. We encourage early submission; papers will be evaluated in the order they are received.

References

Benevides, T. W., et al. (2020). Listening to the autistic voice: Mental health priorities to guide research and practice in autism from a stakeholder-driven project. *Autism*, 24, 822–833. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361320908410>

Autistica. (n.d.). *Our research: Your research priorities*. Retrieved June 14, 2021, from <https://www.autistica.org.uk/our-research/our-research/your-research-priorities>

Deadline for Submission: February 1, 2022.
The issue is tentatively scheduled for March/April 2023.