Establishing a RCOT Specialist Section Clinical Forum

## “Specialist Section clinical forums are a great opportunity to exercise pride in what we do well, share best practice, network with likeminded occupational therapists and provide the tools for our continuing professional development.” Quote from a member

What is a Specialist Section clinical forum?

* Specialist Section clinical forums are a way of enabling occupational therapists with a common specialist interest to share expertise, learn, meet and network.
* A clinical forum sits under an umbrella Specialist Section.
* A clinical forum can offer a real or virtual resource to the Specialist Section membership and is an additional membership benefit.
* A clinical forum will have a small committee, up to six members, to direct activity and a network of interested members.

Who is in a Specialist Section clinical forum?

* In order to join a clinical forum, you must be a member of the relevant umbrella Specialist Section.
* All Specialist Section and clinical forum members must be members of RCOT.
* Clinical forums should be UK wide.

What is the difference between a clinical forum and a Specialist Section?

* The role of the Committee of the Specialist Section is to share expertise and the knowledge of the area of practice. In addition to clinical networking, Specialist Sections have administration and financial governance responsibilities. Clinical forums are sub-groups of Specialist Sections and provide networking meetings and learning opportunities for members.
* Clinical forums report to the Specialist Section NEC and comply with all RCOT Specialist Section governance.

What are the benefits to a Specialist Section of having a clinical forum?

* To increase clinical expertise within the Specialist Section and NEC.
* To do targeted pieces of work related to sub-specialities.
* To have the clinical forum represented by the Specialist Sections at professional meetings and forums.
* To develop a more specialised body of evidence and expertise.
* More focused work, more value for members – active CPD, including study days and workshops, content for newsletters/webinars.
* Specific community of people who share best practice in a variety of clinical and/or disease specific subjects.
* Wider exposure to practice issues and subjects in forum areas.
* Variety of forum may tempt people to join one or more Specialist Sections and increase membership numbers.
* Showcase the breath of occupational therapy practice within a Specialist Section.

What are the benefits to members of having a clinical forum within a Specialist Section?

* To support and develop clinical expertise among members.
* To recognise the clinical sub-speciality as a clinical forum and to raise the profile of the clinical area of expertise.
* To network and have access to a professional community of occupational therapists who share best practice in a variety of clinical and/or disease specific subjects.
* To showcase the breath of occupational therapy practice.
* To be a greater voice within the professional community and RCOT.
* To be involved in RCOT consultations and/or pieces of work and be the “go to place” for external stake holders and RCOT work streams.
* To receive support for governance from RCOT including GDPR, social media, webpages.
* To receive funding to develop clinical forum activities, events, networking days, conferences.
* To have regular updates in the Specialist Section newsletter sent monthly to members and on the Specialist Section webpages.
* To be able to use RCOT meeting and conference facilities free of charge when available.
* To be able to access RCOT staff as appropriate.
* To have expenses paid for committee activities as agreed by the treasurer.
* To benefit from all the Specialist Section RCOT benefits as outlined in the RCOT Information for Specialist Sections document.

How do clinical forums work?

* Clinical forums can meet on a regular basis to discuss issues within their domain of practice and professional development. It provides an opportunity to form a network with colleagues and keep updated with practice information.
* All RCOT Specialist Sections clinical forums are required to follow the Specialist Section terms of reference and governance procedures. This is to ensure clear and transparent governance and communication and to ensure that their actions are supportive of the Specialist Sections.
* There should be between two and six members to as act as leads for the clinical forum and meet up to four times a year as necessary. This can be done virtually.
* Regular updates on activity should be provided to the NEC to update the committee and assist with the production of the six-monthly and annual reports.
* Clinical forums should deliver one networking event each year and provide regular updates for Specialist Section newsletters and webpages.

How does a clinical forum work with the Specialist Section NEC?

* Each Specialist Section holds an Annual Review Meeting (ARM) between October and June each year. All clinical forums provide updates and contribute to the annual report.
* The Specialist Section treasurer manages the finances for all clinical forums in accordance with the RCOT Financial Guidelines. Close liaison is required between the NEC, treasurer, and the forum to ensure compliance with RCOT guidance.
* If financial support is necessary to support the clinical forum, the link person must contact the Specialist Section treasurer for advice. Clinical forums do not hold their own bank accounts or money.
* All clinical forums contribute to the Specialist Section business planning processes, webpages, newsletter, the Specialist Section annual report and six-monthly activity report collated by the NEC.
* The NEC should be informed of any changes to the forums organising committee.
* the Specialist Section needs to allocate a budget each year to cover clinical forum expenses such as travel for up to 4x meetings a year. A suggested amount would be £300. All other events and study days need to be budgeted and discussed with the Specialist Section chair and treasurer. All clinical forums must follow the financial guidelines outlined by RCOT and the Specialist Section.

What are the governance procedures?

* A clinical forum may have up a committee up to 6 people.
* All committee members shall hold a term of office, for three years, and then can be re-elected for a further three years. Each committee member can serve for no more than six consecutive years on the clinical forum.
* When any member completes a term of office, one year should normally lapse before the member is eligible to apply and be considered for a further term of office.
* The committee membership starts from the date of Annual Review Meeting in line with the RCOT Business year, 1 October each year.
* A viable clinical forum should have approximately 30 members.

How are clinical forums developed?

* When members identify a shared specialist interest, which would be of interest to a number of members, but no current group exists, a clinical forum can be created working with RCOT. The first step would be to approach the [UK Branches Manager](mailto:Louise.cusack@rcot.co.uk).

What type of activities could a clinical forum do?

* Run a networking event
* Run networking meetings, for example ‘Learn and Lunch’
* Write articles for newsletters
* Be involved in consultations
* Be involved in RCOT campaigns and streams of work
* Attend study days or conferences and report back
* Raise the profile of the clinical speciality by presenting at events or study days
* Be involved in developing membership resources
* Target CPD and learning
* Have fun networking sessions or events
* Film nights
* Speaker nights
* Webinars
* Reciprocal learning events

Useful links:

[Branch Resources & Regional Committees (Members Only) - RCOT](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/rcot-branch-resources)

[About Specialist Sections - RCOT](https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/specialist-sections/about-specialist-sections)

[Information for Specialist Sections](https://www.rcot.co.uk/file/9060/download?token=8IUO4NRY)