

# Research Guide: Recruiting RCOT members as research participants

Royal College of  
Occupational  
Therapists



## Background

The Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT), as the professional body for occupational therapists in the United Kingdom, often receives enquiries about recruiting RCOT members as research participants. In line with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018, and in the best interest of its members, the Royal College does not permit researchers to use its data sources to contact members with research recruitment information and does not disseminate recruitment information to members on behalf of researchers.

There are, however, 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 these options as a research recruitment strategy, you should be aware of potential limitations, including:

- These options are discretionary, and therefore acceptance of your request cannot be guaranteed.
- The recruitment timescales for your research project may not correspond with the dates when information can be disseminated (for example in a particular issue of OTnews or Specialist Section newsletter).
- As an opportunistic sampling method, it is not possible to accurately predict or ascertain how many RCOT members will access the information.
- Response rates may be low.

It is, therefore, not advisable to use these options as your primary means of recruiting research participants, as it could leave your project vulnerable to under recruitment.

## RCOT Branches (Specialist Sections/Regional Groups):

The Royal College's Specialist Sections can provide an invaluable means of contacting occupational therapists working in a particular speciality, whilst Regional Groups can be potentially useful for contacting members within a specific area of the UK.

Enquiries received by the RCOT Education and Research Team are normally signposted to the relevant RCOT Branch(es). Researchers may also approach the Chair or R&D lead of the RCOT Branch directly to see if they can assist with the request.

RCOT Branches will determine 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 the researcher is a member of the Specialist Section/post-graduate researcher, or whether the research addresses questions that are a priority to the profession).

Membership lists cannot be shared, but RCOT Branches may be able to alert their members to opportunities to contribute to relevant studies (for example through email, or highlighting the opportunity in a newsletter).

Find out more about Specialist Sections at: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/specialist-sections/about-specialist-sections>

Find out more about Regional Groups at: <https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-us/regional-and-local-groups/join-local-or-regional-group>

## **OTnews**

RCOT members may make a request for research recruitment information to be included in the 'Professional Resources' section of OTnews. This option requires completion of the '*OTnews – Research recruitment request form*', available at: [www.rcot.co.uk/news/otnews](http://www.rcot.co.uk/news/otnews) . Please note, requests can only be made once ethics approval has been granted.

The form must be sent to the OTnews editor. The editor cannot, however, guarantee publication as inclusion is entirely dependent on factors such as available space in any given month, advertising pressures and number of requests.

The time lapse is also an issue to consider. In line with most printed publications, there can be a delay of a minimum of 6 weeks between a request being submitted and it reaching the reader.

## **RCOT social media**

RCOT members may also use the members-only LinkedIn group, available at <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/2460522>, to post a message.

The post should provide succinct and relevant information about the research/survey, and details of ethics approval (i.e. the name of the ethics approval committee, review reference number and date of approval). Inappropriate or inadequate communications will be removed in line with the RCOT's website terms and conditions.

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

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