

2024

## Intersections of Occupational Therapy and Translational Science

M Nicole Martino  
*University of Nebraska Medical Center*

Tell us how you used this information in this [short survey](#).

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unmc.edu/tso>



Part of the [Occupational Therapy Commons](#), and the [Public Health Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Martino, M. N. (2024). Intersections of Occupational Therapy and Translational Science. *Translational Science in Occupation*, 1(1). <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.32873/unmc.dc.tso.1.1.03>

This Knowledge Exchange is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UNMC. It has been accepted for inclusion in Translational Science in Occupation by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@UNMC. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@unmc.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@unmc.edu).

---

## Intersections of Occupational Therapy and Translational Science

### Keywords

Translational Science, Occupational Therapy, Knowledge Translation

### Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

# TSO

Translational Science in Occupation

Volume #, Issue #

---

## **Intersections of Occupational Therapy and Translational Science**

---

M. Nicole Martino, Ph.D., OTR/L

University of Nebraska Medical Center

United States

---

**Intersections of Occupational Therapy and Translational Science**

While occupational therapy and translational sciences are separate disciplines, they share similar objectives in optimizing health of individuals, groups, and populations. Occupational therapy focuses on restoring and improving one's capacity to carry out everyday tasks, whereas translational science seeks to connect biomedical research with its practical implementation in healthcare (AOTA, 2023; Gilliland et al., 2019). Both disciplines promote using empirical evidence, holistic perspectives, and collaboration when tackling health issues. By focusing on these areas, occupational therapists can improve their translational science skills, effectively integrate research into practice and contribute to the advancement of the field. This paper explains similarities between occupational therapy and transitional sciences, emphasizing common ideas, approaches, and possibilities for collaborative efforts in improving health.

Both disciplines aspire to holistically serve people, communities, and populations. Occupational therapists not only treat the person, but also consider the person's environment and occupations as integral to their intervention approach. Translational scientists use a systems thinking approach, evaluating complex external forces and interrelationships that may influence interventions (Gilliland et al., 2019). Both professions understand the importance of various factors and interrelationships between individuals and their environment, helping to avoid a reductionist perspective which focuses solely on the individual, population, or system's components.

Occupational therapy and translational science prioritize integration of evidence-based practice to ensure interventions are effective, safe, and tailored to individual needs. Occupational therapy practitioners rely on theoretical knowledge, assessments, and evidence-based interventions to guide clinical decision-making. Similarly, translational science aims to translate scientific discoveries into practical applications, ensuring research findings are effectively used in real-world settings. Both disciplines promote active integration of research findings into practice.

Encouraging innovation and creativity is important within both disciplines. Occupational therapists often develop adaptive strategies and use creative approaches to support client engagement in meaningful activities. Translational science promotes the development of new interventions and technologies that optimize healthcare delivery and patient outcomes. Both fields embrace new ideas and innovative solutions to enhance health and quality of life.

Collaboration is key in both occupational therapy and translational science. Occupational therapy therapists and occupational therapy assistants often work together with in intraprofessional teams. In addition, they collaborate with healthcare professionals, educators, and researchers in interdisciplinary teams to provide comprehensive care. Similarly, translational science uses a team science approach, emphasizing collaboration between researchers, clinicians, policymakers, and other knowledge users to facilitate translation of research findings into clinical practice. Scholars from both disciplines recognize the significance

of shared decision-making, using the abilities, expertise, and contributions of all team members (Gitlin et al., 2010; Sudsawad, 2007).

The convergence of occupational therapy and translational science presents exciting opportunities for improving individuals' health and well-being. Despite being distinct disciplines, they share common objectives and approaches that can be harnessed to enhance the practice of occupational therapy. By incorporating translational science principles into their work, occupational therapists can effectively apply research findings to clinical practice, promote evidence-based interventions, encourage innovation, and foster collaboration with diverse knowledge users. This integration of translational science into occupational therapy practice and research holds great potential for advancing the field and ultimately optimizing the health outcomes of individuals, groups, and populations.

### References

- AOTA. (2023). *What Is Occupational Therapy?* <https://www.aota.org/about/what-is-ot>
- Gilliland, C. T., White, J., Gee, B., Kreeftmeijer-Vegter, R., Bietrix, F., Ussi, A. E., Hajduch, M., Kocis, P., Chiba, N., Hirasawa, R., Suematsu, M., Bryans, J., Newman, S., Hall, M. D., & Austin, C. P. (2019). The fundamental characteristics of a translational scientist. *ACS Pharmacology & Translational Science*, 2(3), 213–216.  
<https://doi.org/10.1021/acsptsci.9b00022>
- Gitlin, L. N., Jacobs, M., & Earland, T. V. (2010). Translation of a dementia caregiver intervention for delivery in homecare as a reimbursable Medicare service: Outcomes and lessons learned. *The Gerontologist*, 50(6), 847-854.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnq057>
- Sudsawad, P. (2007). *Knowledge translation: Introduction to models, strategies, and measures*. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, National Center for the Dissemination of Disability Research.  
[https://ktdrr.org/ktlibrary/articles\\_pubs/ktmodels/](https://ktdrr.org/ktlibrary/articles_pubs/ktmodels/)