
Editorial

We join Dr Nora Griffin-Shirley in welcoming you to *IJOM*'s eighth volume. Nora's emphasis on research to inform O&M practice is highly important and we hope that *IJOM* goes some way in disseminating research-based findings that positively influences O&M education and practice. An O&M research colleague once said that if surgeons were to lose their base of medical knowledge, then they would have to stop working. They would have no idea about the way to effectively treat patients as they would lack research-based knowledge about for example, anaesthesia, the meaning of symptoms, and the likely risks of particular surgical procedures. Although it seems unrealistic to draw similar comparisons to the practice of O&M, without O&M research to inform practice, the profession risks stagnation and lost opportunity to harness the new technology and innovation that might improve the lifestyles of people who are blind or vision impaired.

There is risk in the O&M work that we do. For instance, we teach people who are blind or have vision impairment to use and rely on guide dogs, long canes, and technology; cross roads in complex environments; walk through unfamiliar environments; and access public transport. We must consider, for example, such questions as: does this guide dog have a suitable temperament to undertake this work? Is there a safer way for this person to move about? Are we teaching a reliable technique so that this client can cross the road safely? Does this type of long cane with this particular tip actually benefit the client? Is this the safest way to teach a person who is blind to board a train, bus, or ferry? Is this technology reliable enough so that the client can depend on it when travelling at all times of day, under all weather conditions? To answer any question truthfully and reliably, we need evidence and answers that only quality research can provide.

As indicated in the Editorial *IJOM* 7, 2015, we have included some papers submitted by authors that presented at the International Mobility Conference (IMC) 15, Montreal, Canada. Excitingly, we are on the verge of IMC16 that will take place in Dublin in June 2017 (imc16.com) after which *IJOM* will publish the innovative and outstanding work by some conference presenters. As Dr Nurit Neustadt-Noy shared at the opening of IMC15, this conference commenced in 1979 in a 'bar' in Germany by a group of O&M specialists with the intention of sharing knowledge that would assist the expansion and improvement of services worldwide. Thirty-seven years and 16 vibrant conferences later, their vision continues and we intend to develop their vision of promoting more research

and networking at conferences such as this. Networking at IMCs has resulted in some significant collaborative projects for example, devising ways to deliver O&M programs remotely in hard-to-get-to regions in Australia, Canada, and the United States. Such initial work could possibly be the forerunner to more mainstream remote services becoming available in the future within countries as well as between countries. Why isn't it possible for an O&M specialist in a particular country, sitting at his or her work desk, to deliver an O&M program to a person with vision impairment in another country? I refer you to the work of Barrett-Lennard that is presented in this volume.

Within this volume the lead article by Bourquin, Wall Emerson, Sauerburger, and Barlow investigated the effect of various types of pedestrian gazing toward drivers to observe driver yielding (stopping) behaviour. Remarkably, they found no significant difference in the driver's yielding behaviour between gazing at the driver and not gazing at the driver. This discovery is somewhat surprising and perhaps a little confronting since many O&M specialists believe that when a client looks toward a driver it will reduce their speed or they will stop for the person with vision impairment. The authors discuss the reasons why this discovery is not necessarily a negative finding. The implications for teaching individuals with vision impairment road crossing skills are also discussed.

Lane, Matthews, Ellison, and Palmer examined the health benefits of dog guides on their handlers. Their study involved three focus groups of dog guide handlers from three Australian states. They identified that there were numerous positive changes that dog guides had on the handler's life. These findings are important and contribute to a small but increasing body of research indicating similar findings. IMC15 provided a visual presentation about the reliable use of robotics to assist a person's O&M. These robots accessed a variety of environments at a variety of speeds across any surface or terrain. Although there has been no research on this topic, it would be interesting to discover whether dog guide handlers reported similar positive life changes using robots while enjoying a companion animal as well.

Gallimore, Keay, and Tinsley reported on the five-year development of the Client Evaluation Tool (CET). The CET is an outcome measure designed to evaluate the progress of adult clients who undertake O&M programs. Also included are the results of the tool having been used by 361 clients. The CET appears valid and reliable. It can be applied to all types of O&M programs including guide dog programs, and can be administered in a relatively short period of time.

Ambrose-Zaken reviewed 50 US state education websites and surveyed US personnel preparation programs training teachers of learners with vision impairment (TVI) to teach O&M skills and related services. It appears that TVIs' education in O&M is limited and she discusses the implications of this limited education on the O&M profession.

Hallak and Aguerrevere have investigated the face validity of the Texas 2 STEPS Evaluation Tool. The tool guides O&M practitioners in assessing the O&M skills of children from birth to five years of age. Thirty certified O&M specialists (COMS) used the tool and provided feedback about its effectiveness.

Continuing with O&M in young children, Sankako, Marília, Lucareli, de Carvalho, and Bracciali investigated the gait differences between children (5-7 years of age) who were blind to those with vision impairment. A significant difference was found between the two groups with regard to their stride length. The authors discuss this important finding and its implications for O&M training.

Providing O&M programs in remote regions has always been challenging for O&M specialists and costly for O&M service provider organisations. Accessing remote regions is also time consuming. Barrett-Lennard discusses her use of video conferencing to provide O&M services in remote regions of Australia. Although in its early phase, these trials have been successful and she is currently working on refining and expanding this much needed service.

Stitt describes a pilot study about an organisation's peer support program for clients with vision impairment. Information about vision impairment and O&M-related topics is provided over the telephone by volunteers with vision impairment. These volunteers are also very capable travellers and use a range of mobility devices (canes, technology, guide dogs). Seventy-one clients who received support participated in the study and they provided feedback that the information and support was outstanding.

Finally, a significant issue experienced by dog guide handlers is interference or discrimination against their dog guides. Thomas tested a new measure of attitudes to service dogs: The People's Attitude to Dogs in Service Scale (PADS) to determine whether or not the public's behaviour might be related to dogmatism rather than a lack of education about dog guides and the way to treat them. The findings suggest that strategies other than public awareness campaigns might be required to change public opinion and behaviour toward service dogs. This finding is significant, especially for those organisations which at great expense fund public awareness campaigns.

Thank you to all who submitted articles for this volume. We, the editors and our distinguished editorial advisory panel members sincerely appreciate the time, hard work, and effort that is spent in article preparation and editing. No idea is ridiculous if it is qualified by conclusive research and contributes to improving the lives of people with vision impairment.

Desirée Gallimore & Mike Steer

Editors