

CPD with a twist: The ROTTERS Curry Club

Good research relies on good networking; getting the right group of people together is essential to executing a project well. If you are new to an area this can be especially tricky. This led Katrina Bannigan, lead for the Participation in Everyday Life research group (The research group for occupational science and occupational therapy research at Plymouth University), to set-up a 'curry club'. She had heard about curry clubs; Katrina had lived in Yorkshire so was aware of the BAOT Northern & Yorkshire's curry club to link members from across the region. This curry club was slightly different because it was focussed solely on bringing together occupational therapists interested in research. This is reflected in the name we gave it; ROTTERS as in Research Occupational Therapists.

The emphasis was on having an interest in research. You do not have to be doing research to go along; just interested and keen to meet up with likeminded others. We made it an informal curry club, with no set agenda, to enable occupational therapists to get to know and network with other occupational therapists interested in research; after all collaboration is integral to research. The only thing we fixed were the arrangements so everyone would know when it was and how it worked. We meet on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.00pm. Originally we changed venues every month and announced the next venue when we posted the event on Eventbrite. As time has gone on we have found a venue that we all like and have a regular booking there. Our aim was to make it as easy, accessible and welcoming as possible for people to come along and it has worked.

ROTTTERS has been going for nearly two years and has been a great success. Although focussed on research it has become a really useful conduit for supporting continuing professional development (CPD) and facilitating academic partnership. Martha Hocking,

Community Children's Occupational Therapist at Devon Integrated Children's Services, who coordinates ROTTERS says: "Being involved in organising ROTTERS has enabled me to make connections with OTs across a broad range of services. Meeting with the curry club helps to keep me up to date about current research, as well as emerging research, that other Club members are involved in. It also provides an opportunity to share experiences of service provision, professional practice and provides a great forum for reflective practice. It has also allowed me to explore my post graduate opportunities informally. The curry club members are always keen to share their post graduate stories and offer advice on possible academic routes. Therefore, two years in I have finally found the best option for me ... my masters in Advanced Professional Practice in Occupational Therapy awaits".

Alison Warren, Lecturer at Plymouth University and member of the Participation in Everyday Life research group, who has been a stalwart of ROTTERS since she moved to Plymouth has found: "Meeting up regularly with peers who have an interest in occupational therapy, research and reflecting on professional practice has been great for my own professional development. As the new lead for the Advanced Professional Practice Masters in Occupational Therapy at Plymouth University, the curry club has given me time to encourage local OTs explore relevant CPD opportunities within the University and beyond".

Katrina describes: "When I was new to the South West ROTTERS was pivotal in helping me make strong links with practice. I have been able to support occupational therapists with thinking about their career development particularly explaining the different routes into research. The National Institute of Health Research sponsored Masters in Clinical Research is a great opportunity for occupational therapists. It was fantastic for ROTTERS to host the conference dinner when the #CountMeIn2016 international scientific meeting

about Children's participation was held at Plymouth University. Researchers from all over the world attended our curry club; it was a wonderful way to facilitate networking at a conference as well as for local occupational therapists to meet world renowned researchers".

It has long been acknowledged that new approaches to CPD are needed that reflect the nature of life and work in the 21st Century. Our experiences show that a curry club can serve the CPD needs of occupational therapists in different stages of their careers. We commend the curry club as an alternative approach to CPD. If you would like to be added to the ROTTERS mailing list please email martha.hocking@nhs.net. If you would like to know more about organising and hosting a curry club please email either Alison.warren@plymouth.ac.uk or Katrina.Bannigan@plymouth.ac.uk.

Martha Hocking, Community Children's Occupational Therapist, Devon Integrated Children's Services

Alison Warren, Programme Lead for MSc Advanced Professional Practice in Occupational Therapy, Lecturer, School of Health Professions, Plymouth University

Katrina Bannigan, Associate Professor (Reader) of Occupational Therapy, School of Health professions, Plymouth University

