



Steven Bloch & Cristina McKean

Research and Development Forum

Steven Bloch and Cristina McKean introduce the new IJLCD/RCSLT student project prize: celebrating the research excellence of student SLTs

Looking to the next generation of SLTs

The International Journal of Language & Communication Disorders (IJLCD) has always been a clinically orientated journal; one that aims to represent the breadth of international research impacting on UK speech and language therapy practice. SLTs continue to lead on, and/or contribute significantly to, many of the most successful articles. This reflects not only their ongoing commitment to clinical evidence, but also their research literacy and ability to communicate with a wide range of audiences.

For many years, the IJLCD has recognised the invaluable contribution of its authors by awarding an annual prize for the paper that stands out most among its peers. This has always been a challenging decision, with the editorial team balancing a range of factors, including originality, research rigour and clinical impact. With the generous support of our publishers, Wiley, this tradition will continue, but we are now looking forward to the next generation of clinicians for whom robust research evidence will become ever more vital, both in terms of clinical practice and service provision. It is with this next generation in

mind that we have turned our attention to student SLTs.

Practical research activity

Each year, the majority of UK students graduating with a recognised speech and language therapy degree are required to engage in practical research activity – typically in collaboration with an academic supervisor, but sometimes with practising SLTs as well. These students are required to submit a project in the form of a thesis or dissertation.

Many of these projects reach incredibly high standards and, in our minds at least, produce original findings that could either make an important contribution to clinical practice or inform further enquiry into clinically related areas of knowledge. Some are recognised through departmental and university-wide prizes; others by external organisations through topic-specific awards, such as that offered by the British Aphasiology Society. A few are published in peer-reviewed journals, but we are aware that many are not utilised beyond their no-less-important contribution to the individual student's degree.

From 2018 onwards, the IJLCD

editorial team, in partnership with the RCSLT, will be celebrating the excellence of student SLTs, their supervisors and higher education institutions (HEIs) by launching a new annual IJLCD/RCSLT student project prize. The scheme will be solely for RCSLT student members.

Nominations and submissions

All eligible UK HEIs will be invited to nominate one student project per pre-registration speech and language therapy programme per year. This will accommodate both undergraduate and postgraduate pre-registration programmes.

The award criteria will be advertised in advance, focusing on actual or potential clinical impact and, crucially, the contribution of the student in the research design, implementation and write-up. Submissions will comprise a project abstract, a supporting statement from an academic supervisor and a checklist detailing the contribution made by the student (eg ethics, data collection, analysis, dissemination, engagement with participants, etc).

Project abstracts will be shortlisted and judged by an award panel comprising IJLCD editors, members of the RCSLT research team and invited SLTs. The prize winner will be awarded a certificate, a cash prize and the opportunity to be mentored by a subject specialist member of the IJLCD editorial team to bring their work to submission standard. A manuscript submission to the IJLCD will be expected within 12 months of the award. Commendations will be awarded to two runner-up projects.

Inevitably, we cannot recognise the contribution made by all RCSLT student members. Many students are engaged in equally important activities but, in terms of research, we know how much

work goes into each project and wish to celebrate excellence through the promotion of high-quality work through the peer-reviewed publication process.

Next steps

We will be liaising with all eligible HEIs to provide them with details of the scheme. The first IJLCD/RCSLT student project prize winner will be announced at the IJLCD Winter Lecture and through Bulletin in late 2018/early 2019. ■

Dr Steven Bloch and Dr Cristina McKean, editors, *International Journal of Language and Communication Disorders*

Research resources for student SLTs

We hope all of the research resources we produce and publicise are useful and accessible to SLTs and student SLTs alike. Here are a few that are particularly useful for student SLTs; however, they are also of use for practising SLTs at any stage in their career.

■ Students 4 Best Evidence (S4BE) – www.students4bestevidence.net – is a growing network of students from around the world who are interested in learning more about evidence-based healthcare (EBH). They use the website and social media to spread learning and ideas about EBH, and are always keen for contributors – a great addition for your CV!

■ RCSLT e-learning modules include 'An introduction to evidence-based practice' and 'Research Under the Spotlight: navigating and understanding research articles'. These modules offer an introduction to evidence-based practice and one of its three key components: research evidence.

■ speechbite.com is a database of intervention studies in speech and language therapy that rates research using the PEDro-P rating scale to help you identify more robust research.



ILLUSTRATION BY Martyna Wojcik

“Many of these projects produce original findings that could make an important contribution to clinical practice or inform further enquiry”

Introducing Katie Chadd, RCSLT Research Support Officer



I am an early-career SLT, with a strong interest in research and the scientific methods of creating an evidence base for the profession. I have worked as a research intern for the past year, where I have been able to split my time between a clinical role, working with people with aphasia, and a research role, compiling datasets and contributing to dissemination activities. As part of this, I have also been able to

undertake my own research project to earn an MSc, using quantitative methods to evaluate aphasia therapy effects and assessment tools. During this time I learnt to appreciate the different barriers clinicians face in embedding new concepts in their everyday practice, even with a strong desire to be a research-aware practitioner. I am interested in identifying enablers to support evidence-based practice and build confidence in clinicians who are early on in their careers.

My key aim as Research Support Officer at the RCSLT is to continue to build on the R&D team's initiatives such as the Research Champions Network, particularly the involvement of the new generation of therapists. I'm also keen to promote the sometimes-unrealised research skills of our highly capable profession, and demystify some principles of research. If you have any queries about your evidence-based practice, becoming a research champion or accessing research, please get in touch with me at katie.chadd@rcslt.org