

AGILE BLOG- Getting involved in research

To introduce myself- I am Katie Robinson and I am the Research Officer for AGILE. I am passionate about developing clinical care for older people through high quality evidence. I am also keen to support physiotherapists to develop, understand and conduct research that can further our profession and the care we deliver.

In honesty when I finished my undergraduate physiotherapy degree I vowed never to use SPSS (the statistical software) ever again! As a newly qualified physiotherapist I started to realise I had many unanswered questions. I was frustrated that many of the research papers I looked at excluded the patient groups I was seeing and I often couldn't see how to apply the evidence to a real life situation. I dipped my toe in the research world within my first physiotherapy job working with a private company to pilot a vibration therapy intervention for young adults with complex physical disabilities. I absolutely loved being part of the project and found I was challenging and developing my problem solving skills.

This was when I caught the research bug and as they say the rest is history. I undertook a National Institute of Health Research funded Masters in Research Methods which was a great grounding in understanding research across healthcare. Since then I have worked on a range of therapy focused research projects and completed a PhD in exercise for older people in 2017. The importance of developing the capacity and capability in allied health professions has been recognised by the National Institute of Health Research and there are now established pathways to support clinical academic careers. Many people like me follow a non-linear route which can be just as rewarding and offer as many opportunities for development along the way.

Although it was initially very daunting, getting more involved in research has opened up so many opportunities. I never thought I would be on a national committee such as AGILE for one! I have had excellent support from clinical academic mentors and the opportunity to meet and learn from International experts in the care of older people. I was invited to speak at Physio UK in 2014 about my work and I have had access to formal training in clinical skills such as motivational interviewing. I have learnt a lot about myself along the way!

There are many ways for you to get involved in research which can all help develop care for older people; helping to recruit participants in your service, running journal clubs to deliver best practice, participating yourself in research projects related to physiotherapy, reviewing journal articles as a peer reviewer and contributing to national audit programmes. I am keen to hear from members about any ways you are getting involved in research and service improvement so please do get in touch (agileresearch@gmail.com).

We as physiotherapists and allied health professionals need to develop evidence that is meaningful to our profession and the older people we work with and we are the best people to do this!