

ACOTUP Researcher Profile

Name of researcher: Mary Ann McColl, Queen's University

Degrees and professional qualifications (including fellowships):

MTS (Theological Studies), PhD (Preventive Medicine & Biostatistics),
MHSc (Community Health & Epidemiology), BSc(OT), Basic I & II Chaplaincy

Email: mcollm@queensu.ca

Website: http://rehab.queensu.ca/faculty/people/mary_ann_mccoll

Area of research: OT theory; Disability policy; Spirituality & health; Community integration & social support.

Research related awards and honors:

- Ken Langford Lifetime Member Award, Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (2013)
- Mylks Award, Queen's Theological College (2007)
- Outstanding Scholar, National Honor Society of Occupational Therapy (USA) (2003)
- Lifetime Fellowship Award, Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (2002)
- Circle of Excellence, Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (2001)
- Muriel Driver Memorial Lectureship, Canadian Assoc. Occupational Therapists (2000)
- Canadian Researcher Award, Canadian Head Injury Association (1999)
- Award of Merit, Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (1995)
- Distinguished Research Award, Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario (1992)
- Ontario Graduate Scholarship (1985-87)

Grants/funding history: I have selected 5 projects from 97 funded projects since 1985, totalling approximately \$17m.

- McColl, M.A., Adair, B., Aiken, A., Jongbloed, L., Kobayashi, A., Timmons, V. et al. (2009-14). The Canadian Disability Policy Alliance: Learning collaborative and equity coalition. Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Community-University Research Alliance (\$1,000,000).
- McColl, M.A., Aiken, A., Green, M., Birtwhistle, R., Godwin, M., McColl, A., Norman, K., Smith, K., Brankston, G. (2009-13). Actionable Nuggets: Translating research findings on spinal cord injury into family practice. Rick Hansen Foundation (\$290,000).
- McColl, M.A., Stienstra, D., Shortt, S., Boyce, W., Godwin, M., Havens, B., Kaufert, J., Krogh, K. (2003-05). Reducing inequities in access to primary and preventive health services for people with disabilities. Canadian Institutes of Health Research (\$99,176).
- McColl, M.A., Bickenbach, J., Johnston, J., Schumaker, M., Smith, K., & Yealland, B. (1997-98). Spiritual issues associated with traumatic onset disability. Fetzer Institute (\$40,000).
- Law, M.A., Baptiste, S., McColl, M.A., Opzoomer, A., and Polatajko, H. (1988-89). Development and evaluation of the Canadian Occupational Performance Measure. National Health Research and Development Program (\$20,000); Canadian Occupational Therapy Foundation (\$10,000).

Research collaboration: My most productive research partnership has been with Spinal Cord Injury Ontario (formerly the Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario). I have worked with them since my doctoral dissertation in 1987, and have collaborated on at least 20 projects over my career. Most recently, SCIO has been the leading community partner in the Canadian Disability Policy Alliance, a national collaboration of disability researchers, community organizations, and federal and provincial policy-makers, aimed at co-creating and mobilizing knowledge to enhance disability policy in Canada. The Alliance was funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council for a period of 5 years (2009-14) to address five policy areas: Culture & recreation; Employment; Education; Federal disability policy; Health services.

What is the most important thing in mentoring graduate students? Although it sounds somewhat hokey, in my view, the most important thing in mentoring graduate students is to find a way to love each one of them -- and by that I mean, to truly want what is best for them, to take real pleasure and pride in their accomplishments, and to enjoy seeing them fulfill their vision of the future. This goes hand in hand with setting high standards for them and seeing something in them that they cannot yet see in themselves. It also sometimes entails pushing them outside their comfort zone, knowing that this is where the real learning and growth occurs. It also means being OK with them being mad at you from time to time, knowing you have done your job and fulfilled your responsibility to them, even when it would have been easier to take the path of less resistance, and let them do what they wanted to do and get by on less than they are capable of.

Most significant publications: In addition to 197 peer-reviewed articles and 64 book chapter, there are also 16 additional books; however, I have chosen these 3 books as my most significant publications for an OT audience.

- Law, M., Baptiste, S., McColl, M.A., Polatajko, H., Carswell, A., Pollock, N. (2014). Canadian Occupational Performance Measure and Manual (5th ed). Ottawa: CAOT Publ.
- McColl, M.A., Law, M.C., & Stewart, D. (2014). The theoretical basis of occupational therapy (3rd ed). Thorofare NJ: Slack Inc.
- McColl, M.A. (2011). Spirituality and occupational therapy (2nd ed). Ottawa: CAOT Publ.

Tips would you give for new investigators: I don't believe there actually are any "tips" for becoming a successful researcher, only a commitment to partnership with other researchers and knowledge users. The basis for successful partnership is trust and a genuine interest and understanding of the problems experienced by consumers. There is no substitute for behaving honourably toward your partners, and taking extreme care never to offend or detract from their issues and their agenda. Reciprocity is needed to sustain the relationship, such as volunteer commitments to boards, committees, speaking engagements, community events. You want your research partners to view participating in one of your research projects as a win-win situation – a net gain for them too!!

A good test of your commitment to your knowledge users is to see if you can state the problem addressed by the research in the words of consumers. If you can imagine how a client or family member would express the problem, then you probably understand it well enough. If you can only express it in terms that another researcher would understand, then you probably need to work on seeing the problem through the eyes of the people who experience it. These types of relationships cannot be faked for the benefit of funding agencies. It is extremely transparent to reviewers if there is not an appropriate degree of engagement between academics and

community partners. I suggest cultivating real relationships with the people you hope will benefit from the research you are doing. It is really the only thing that makes it all meaningful at the end of the day! Remember, you are investing in a whole career -- perhaps 30 years of doing research with this partner -- not just the current grant or project. It is worth an hour or two to take the Exec Director to lunch and hear about what is going on in his or her organization, attend their annual meeting, or volunteer at a fundraiser.