



“I’ll write until the day I die”:
What Occupational Therapists
can learn from a study of
research-active retired women
academics

Dr. Mairead Cahill and Professor
Judi Pettigrew

Presented by Professor Judi
Pettigrew

University of Limerick, Ireland
at the World Federation of
Occupational Therapists
Congress 2026



Study Overview

Retirement is a complex transition.

The academic workforce is ageing.

Older women academics often continue their roles post retirement.

They can face challenges of lack of recognition and visibility (Cahill et al., 2022).

Study Method

Qualitative descriptive study

n = 18

Retired, research-active women academics

Universities across the Republic of Ireland

Reflexive Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022)

Key Themes

1. Research as an enduring meaningful occupation

I'll write until the day I die

2. Resilience in the face of challenge

I'm 82 now and I'm still writing and publishing

3. Contribution, purpose, and legacy

I plan to write more popular versions of what I've written academically

4. Community as a support for continued engagement

When I'm on these committees, it's like a tribe.

Significance for Occupational Therapy

Contributing to their profession and society through meaningful occupation of continued research

Meaningful occupation supports identity, well-being, and adaptation during the transition to retirement

Practice & Policy Implications

Advocate for inclusive post-retirement policies

Support older women's choice to remain occupationally engaged in academic work

Recognise research and writing as a meaningful occupation that contributes to occupational identity and participation

Thank you