

# Assessment of Clinical Reasoning throughout the Physical Therapy Curriculum and Beyond

## Abstract

**Background/Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to assess the critical thinking skill development of physical therapy students and recent graduates. With a challenging healthcare environment comes the need for physical therapists to make clinical judgments in uncertain conditions; as a profession there is an urgency to take a critical look at the development of critical thinking and decision making abilities of students across educational environments.

**Methods:** Students will reflect upon their performance via a qualitative survey; the survey questions are designed to uncover their critical thinking process in conjunction with the semester end comprehensive clinical performance exams at the conclusion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> years. Twelve students at the conclusion of their 4<sup>th</sup> year and the 2 recent graduates/residents will also complete the survey. These individual's critical thinking will be assessed in conjunction with a standardized patient experience similar to the comprehensive clinical performance exams.

**Results:** Pilot data for this project has been collected and will be presented at the APTA's Combined Sections Meeting, February 2010. Information collected in this study will be used to modify curriculum and to better prepare practioners with excellent critirical thinking ability.

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