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 2nd and 3rd years. Twelve students at the conclusion of their 4th 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 practitioners with excellent critical thinking ability.

Contact Information

Julie Ekstrum, PT, DPT, CCS Principal Investigator;
Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Therapy, Boyne Building 114F;
ejekstrum@creighton.edu, 402/280-5956; fax: 402/280-5692

Jennifer Furze PT, DPT; Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Therapy, Boyne Building 113D; jfurze@creighton.edu, 402/280-4835; fax: 402/280-5692

Lisa Black PT, DPT; Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Therapy, Boyne Building 114E; lisablack@creighton.edu, 402/280-5638; fax: 402/280-5692

Gail M. Jensen, PT, PhD, FAPTA; Dean, Graduate School and Associate Vice-President for Academic Affairs; Admin Building 131C; Professor, Department of Physical Therapy
gjensen@creighton.edu, 402/280-3727

JB Barr, PT, DPT, OCS; Assistant Professor, Department of Physical Therapy; Boyne Building 113B; jbarr@creighton.edu, 402-280-5691; fax: 402/280-5692