



## Women's Health Physical Therapy in the DR: Cura Personalis

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### Cura Personalis:

#### Women's Health Physical Therapy

Cura personalis - remembering the individuality of each patient as a person with interests, hopes and fears - is crucial no matter the patient population. As physical therapists, it is our job to help individuals return to a life that brings joy and fulfillment. Individuals who experience concerns related to pelvic floor dysfunction such as urinary or fecal incontinence or pain with sexual intercourse can benefit from physical therapy services to address these concerns. In an effort to continuously exemplify cura personalis, the Creighton University Department of Physical Therapy (PT) has begun to enhance the presence of Women's Health Physical Therapy in the Dominican Republic (DR). In February 2019, physical therapy was represented on an interprofessional team serving women with urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse and pelvic pain, and collaborations with a local women's health physical therapist were fostered during the annual PT program in April 2019.



### Cura Personalis:

#### Reflections

*During my time in the DR, I joined a team of women's healthcare providers including physicians, medical students, nurses, and nursing students. We provided education on self-care techniques for urinary incontinence, pelvic organ prolapse, and pelvic pain. Many of the women we served in the DR do not have accessible healthcare or minimal services are available. In addressing cura personalis with the women I interacted with, part of treating the whole person includes conversations around sexual health and wellness. Charlas [formal and informal presentations] were provided to review anatomy and physiology of bladder, bowel, and the pelvic floor. We also treated women with pelvic pain associated with sexual intercourse. Vaginal dilators were not readily available, so we improvised and identified other medical supplies that could accomplish the same thing, which really required looking for creative opportunities for the betterment of women in the DR.*

Julie Peterson, PT, DPT  
Board Certified Clinical Specialist in Women's Health



*During my time in the DR I was able to meet with a women's health physical therapist who owns her own practice and treats both men and women for pelvic health and women's health related conditions, such as one would find in the United States. It was wonderful to speak with her and discuss the importance of giving patients a platform to speak about pelvic issues that tend to be considered taboo or inappropriate or too embarrassing to talk about. It is crucial in the practice of physical therapy in any setting to make sure the patient feels comfortable with the PT and trusts her to help make them feel better physically. However, it is also crucial that the PT takes time to listen to the patient thoughtfully to help determine what the patient values, thus focusing the return to the activities that add value and meaning to the patient's life. As PTs, we strive to make the patient more healed and wholly themselves.*

Jenna Iberle, PT, DPT  
Board Certified Clinical Specialist in Women's Health

### Cura Personalis:

#### Future Efforts

Similar to in the United States, women's health and pelvic health physical therapy is not well known in the DR. Urinary incontinence, a condition which women's health PTs treat frequently, is experienced by women (and men) around the world and was common in the DR. Unfortunately, most individuals do not know that physical therapy is an option and their quality of life suffers due to this condition. Therefore, the PT program will continue to collaborate with interprofessional teams to provide women's health physical therapy services while collaborating with local providers to increase education and awareness of PT services for individuals experiencing pelvic floor dysfunction, embodying the Jesuit value of cura personalis.

