

Title: Integrating Cultural Competencies into a PT Curriculum: Cultural Awareness through “Conversation Hours”

Authors: Krug JB; Wingert K

Institution: University of Missouri-Columbia

Abstract Body:

Purpose: To offer a unique learning opportunity for integration of cultural competence as defined by the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) into a graduate physical therapy (PT) education program.

Description: Achievement of cultural competence as part of a PT curriculum is a focus of the APTA. Acknowledging and respecting cultural diversity is a thread woven throughout the University of Missouri (MU) Physical Therapy program through addition of cultures into case studies, hands-on patient care of minorities, and work in the community with people of varying ethnicities. We were contacted by the international TA program on campus to plan meetings for their TAs with 3rd Year PT students. The large number of nationalities represented by the TAs assured a variety of cultural learning opportunities for the PT students. We paired PT students and TAs and arranged for them to discuss cultural differences, health care issues, and ethnically sensitive approaches for caring for a patient of that culture, race, and/or religion. The expected outcome was that PT students would be able to identify and respect individual differences, values, and preferences while developing a plan of care. Objectives were based on the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) requirements for cultural competence. This included item 2.7.1: Identify, respect, and act with consideration for clients’ differences, values, preferences, and expressed needs in all professional activities. In exchange, the PT students offered experiences of American culture, education and family values while assisting the foreign students in formulation of correct English grammar.

Summary of Use: Following the “conversation hours”, PT students provided a cultural presentation to their peers and the PT faculty. During these presentations, the students reflected on information gleaned from interaction with the foreign students as well as from additional research on aspects of that culture. The presentation included an example of a plan of care which incorporated patient preferences and cultural aspects and highlighted differences from what one would expect based on their own background so others may learn and make use of these in future situations.

Importance to Members: Verbal and written feedback from both groups supported the richness of this unique learning experience and indicated that objectives for the activity were met. Written comments indicated that this was a worthy experience which should be continued. In fact, some students requested more “conversation hours” with their “cultural partner”. Responses also indicated that this activity brought awareness of differences that could not be obtained through traditional research, readings, or case studies. Future studies should focus on whether the activity results in a more conscientious and sensitive clinician.