Doctor of Physical Therapy, D.P.T.

The Doctor of Physical Therapy (D.P.T.) is the entry-level professional degree for physical therapists. Based on the number of outstanding applicants, approximately 45 students are annually enrolled in the D.P.T. program.

Technical Standards

Physical therapy is a profession that requires physical, mental, and emotional fitness. In the program, students obtain the foundation of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that are necessary for a successful career as a physical therapist. Technical standards reflect the abilities that a physical therapist must possess for safe and effective clinical practice. Prospective and current students must meet the following technical standards.

General Abilities

Students are expected to possess the intellectual ability to learn, integrate, analyze, and synthesize data. They must have functional use of the senses of vision, hearing, and smell, as well as unimpaired equilibrium. Their exteroceptive senses (touch, movement, stereognosis, and vibratory) must be sufficiently intact to perform activities required for a complete physical therapy education. Students must have motor function capabilities, physical endurance, and the emotional health to meet the demands of entry-level physical therapy education and the demands of total patient care, which may include extended hours of instruction and time in clinic (evenings, nights, and weekends). Students must be capable of punctual, consistent, and reliable attendance in the didactic and clinical education component of the curriculum.

Observation

The ability to observe is required for demonstrations, visual presentations in lectures, and laboratories. Observation requires the functional use of vision, hearing, smell, somatic sensations, and the use of common sense. Students must be able to observe patients accurately and completely, both at a distance and up close, attending to both verbal and nonverbal communication.

Communication

Students must be able to speak and listen to patients in order to elicit information, perceive nonverbal communication, describe changes in mood, communicate effectively and sensitively with patients and their families, as well as instruct patients and their families. Communication in oral, written, and electronic form with the health care team must be effective, efficient, and timely.

Motor/Psychomotor Function

Students are required to have sufficient motor function to ascertain information from patients by auscultation, percussion, palpation, and movement facilitation. Intervention methods may include exercising, lifting, transferring of patients, and assisting during ambulation. These methods must be completed in a manner that assures the safety of a patient as well as the safety of the student. Students must have motor function sufficient to perform the movements required to provide both nonurgent and emergent treatment.