

Physical therapist degree programs and professionalism

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What is professionalism in the context of being a student in a doctor of physical therapist degree program?

A student training to be a doctor of physical therapy should have the professionalism to prepare for the responsibility taking care of patients as a physical therapist in the future. A physical therapist is a health care provider whose professionalism affects the lives of actual patients. Within the field of professionalism, I believe that interpersonal skills, problem solving and behavior responsibility are three key factors in being an effective physical therapist. Having worked in a physical therapy clinic, I can attest to the importance of each of these attributes in ensuring that a person acts with professionalism around patients.

Firstly, interpersonal skills are extremely important to master when working with people. Interpersonal skills form the basis of personal relations between people. Because wellness within the human body is not only due to physical, but also mental health, a physical therapist who can connect with a patient can treat that person more easily. When patients get injured and have trouble moving, their exhausted physical and mental state means that they have to rely on a health care provider. If the therapist can create a strong relationship with the patient, the patient can more easily open up to the therapist give more details about their life and activities, which can sometimes provide clues as to the reason why that person is in pain to begin with. Awhile back, I was working with a patient who had suffered a mild stroke. He was suffering from pain in his left arm, and from his sullen facial expressions, he seemed to not want to talk. Connecting with him seemed to be a very difficult task, as he did not seem interested in communicating.

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Because I knew that he used to be a chef, I focused on using that fact to build up a level of empathy between us. I had previously worked in the restaurant industry as a chef's assistant, and told him all about the fun I had while in working in the job. With a great smile, he then started telling me about earlier parts of his life and explained why he had a mild stroke. By building a better relationship with him, I was able to notice that he usually leaned on the left side of his body, which caused the pain.

Secondly, problem solving is another extremely important skill for a therapist to have. Patients are affected by many mental and physical factors. It is a physical therapist's job to investigate what factors seem to relate to current symptoms and aggravate them more. This process of figuring out what factors affect symptoms is key in diagnosing symptoms, along with healing patients faster by picking out factors that are worsening their health, such as unconscious habits like bad posture and repetitive movements. If a physical therapist is able to solve a problem, he or she has to have an extremely extensive amount of medical knowledge ultimately figure out what the problem is. While at my university, I learned about medial epicondylitis. I was working with a patient who had a pain on the medial side of her elbow. With a couple special tests of the symptoms, I was able to find out that she had medial epicondylitis. Experiences like these fascinate me, as they show how knowledge and problem solving can offer solutions.

Thirdly, behavior responsibility is extremely important in providing effective treatment to patients. By understanding behavior, it allows a therapist to make informed decisions that allow people to have healthier and more

quality lives. By understanding behavior, a physical therapist can also lead patients towards a style of treatment with motivation and encouragement that will then help speed up improvement. While working with my boss as a physical therapist, he gave me a great lesson in responsibility working with patients and improving care by understanding human behavior. Even though patients asked many questions, he always listened very carefully and patiently before tell them gently what patents should do and should not do for treatments.

Thought talking with him, I realized that listening is often more powerful than speaking. One day, a patient I was working with who had previously received sub-par care in physical therapy, started asking me many questions with a slightly aggressive tone. Although I felt discomfort, I calmed down and listened to him carefully. To the best of my knowledge, I explained to him how all treatments worked and why they were needed with my physical therapist's permission. Now, he only comes to the clinic on the days when I work. When patients sometimes bring up misconceptions about physical therapy, a therapist might be able to change their minds by first listening to them and then addressing their concerns, so they can experience the correct concepts within physical therapy. Mastering this skill however, can be accomplished by understanding behavior responsibility.

All types professionalism closely connect to each other. Interpersonal skills allow for good communication and assists in problem solving. Along with behavior responsibility, a physical therapist who understands all three components can truly become an individual who works with professionalism.