

T-DPT GRADUATE PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE CLINICAL VALUE OF AN ONLINE DEGREE

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Background: APTA's Vision 2020 moving toward a doctoring profession includes autonomous practice, life-long learning, evidence based practice, professionalism, direct access and doctoring level education. In response to these changes, numerous tDPT programs began to erupt in aims to offer degree parity for current clinicians. Despite the large number of graduates from these programs, little has been published regarding if the original objectives set forth by the APTA in advancing clinical practice has been achieved. Therefore, the purpose of this mixed-methods design was to assess the perceived value of an online, transitional program from the perspectives tDPT graduates.

Methods: A Qualtrix survey that included both Likert-scale and open-ended questions was sent to 250 physical therapists who had completed the tDPT program over a 1.5 year period.

Results: A total 73 responses were received. The average age of the participants was 50.1 years with an average of 24.6 years in clinical practice. Approximately 35% of the participants reported being foreign trained. The main motivating factors for pursuing the tDPT degree were to achieve a personal goal (35%); stay current with the profession (34%); personal professional advancement (32%) and career advancement (17%). The topic that arose as being most valuable in meeting career goals was evidence based practice.

Discussion: Despite the lack of similar investigations, the findings are similar to those who have completed a post-professional doctorate degree. Learners reported that the program allowed them to gain insight into other fields of practice and advanced their credibility in their current practice setting.

Implications: The American Physical Therapy Association has encouraged inclusiveness for degree parity for all clinicians in achieving the goals originally set forth within Vision 2020. The results of the survey-based study reveal these goals have been and can be achieved through an online t-DPT program.