

THE ORAL HISTORY OF SUSAN SISOLA, PT, PhD

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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE: In an oral history, information is systematically collected from an individual about life experiences with the intent to understand them from the participant's perspective of the past and their place in it. The purpose of this oral history was to examine and document the career and professional experience of Susan Sisola, PT, PhD.

METHODS: Research on oral histories and their conduction was completed. A timeline of key world and national events and changes in healthcare that potentially impacted Dr. Sisola's career was designed. Three video- and audio-taped interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were independently analyzed by each researcher for theme identification prior to determining themes by consensus through discussion and further review of transcripts.

RESULTS: Identified themes followed two pathways. One described historical advancements in physical therapy education and professional practice over the course of Dr. Sisola's career. The other pathway described the themes of excellence and innovation that exemplified Dr. Sisola and her career.

DISCUSSION: The physical therapy profession underwent major changes during Dr. Sisola's career including increased variety of practice settings and scope of practice, narrowing of gender gaps, introduction of evidence-based medicine, and the evolution of patient care. Excellence was displayed throughout Dr. Sisola's career through her focus on others, commitment to learning, risk taking, and advancement of the role of ethics in the profession. Dr. Sisola was an innovator as demonstrated through her work in developing clinical protocols and programs, advancing standards of care in practice, and playing a key role in the formation of the peer review process.

CONCLUSION/IMPLICATIONS: The oral history of Dr. Susan Sisola, PT, PhD, allows current and future physical therapy professionals to learn and reflect on the history of the profession over the past 50 years. Further, it documents and preserves the legacy of her contributions to the profession over the course of her distinguished career.