

PHYSICAL THERAPY CURRICULUM ON THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF INFORMAL CAREGIVERS

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Protection of subjects and records/data of subjects complied with the Mayo Clinic IRB policies and guidelines. This study #12-007062 was approved by IRB on November 16, 2012. The study was deemed exempt by the IRB.

Background and Purpose. Informal caregiver education in clinical practice is often a critical component of patient care; however, research describing best practice guidelines for the inclusion of informal caregiver education in physical therapy curriculum is limited. The purpose of this pilot survey research study was to explore and describe the current educational models and practices used within United States physical therapy programs to prepare entry level physical therapists to train informal caregivers and their care recipients.

Subjects. 39 respondents from Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education accredited physical therapy programs
Methods. A web based electronic survey was utilized and contained questions relating to program demographics, student preparation for providing informal caregiver education and training, beliefs on integration of informal caregiver training into curriculum, and beliefs regarding student achievement outcomes.

Results. Of the sample respondents 9 of 38 reported having no specific goals and/or objectives regarding informal caregiver education. Furthermore, only 34.5% of those respondents claimed that their objectives are integrated into coursework. Also, of the 29 with goals and/or objectives the majority of respondents only believed their curriculum did a fair to good job addressing education and training of informal caregivers. Based on the sample, foundational components related to informal caregivers are not being met. Discussion and

Conclusion. Although, there are specific accreditation and student clinical performance criteria related to the education of informal caregivers, there are entry level physical therapy programs without specific goals and/or objectives in this area. For those programs with goals and objectives, the majority reported only addressing this content area with a fair to good overall rating. Considering the disparities and lack of integration found in curricular content, best practice educational guidelines or recommendations could assist PT programs to better prepare students to both provide necessary education to both patient and informal caregiver.