



## About DPT Clinical Education at FIU Breadth & Depth

Clinical education is the process in physical therapy education where the student is given opportunities in a clinical setting to apply the knowledge, practice the clinical skills and develop professional behaviors with the healthcare team. Specifically, a clinical experience follows completion of a specific portion of the didactic education.

Our clinical education model can best be described as combining integrated and summative approaches. It is one that intersperses three, 8-week experiences within the didactic component of the curriculum, and then culminates with one, 10-week experience at the end of the program.

The locus of control, accountability, and decision-making authority are shared with the academic program and the clinical education site.

Students must work with patients of all ages and a variety of clinical conditions to provide them with the entry-level knowledge and skills they need in the general practice of physical therapy.

Each student, over the three, 8-week, and one, 10-week, full time clinical experiences must have at least one experience in the each of the following settings:

- Musculoskeletal experience (Outpatient Orthopedic setting)
- Inpatient Experience (Acute or Neuro-rehab setting)
- Elective setting

The 34 weeks (12 credit hours) of experiences are interspersed throughout the span of your tenure in the DPT program as follows:

Experience 1 will occur in the fall of the second year, after students complete the necessary sequence in musculoskeletal disorders. For this clinical experience, students must stay within the South Florida, Tri-County area.

Experience 2 will occur in the fall of the third year, after students complete all the courses prior to advanced courses. Students can go in preferred geographic region with faculty approval. Students can go to any clinical setting with the exception of pediatrics.

Experiences 3 and 4 will occur in the spring and summer semesters of their final year. The students will be prepared to perform as competent DPT students in any clinical setting.

Clinical assignments are the responsibility of the Director of Clinical Education (DCE), who will consider the preferences of students, in addition to the objectives of the experiences and the resources available to the department.

We believe that the clinical education component of the curriculum accommodates the interests of the changing healthcare delivery systems, the profession, the patient/client, the clinical facility, and higher education. The outcomes of our clinical education program are congruent with the practice expectations found in *A Normative Model for Physical Therapist Professional Education; Version 97*, performance expectations found in the Physical Therapist Clinical Performance Instrument, and the Guide to Physical Therapy Practice.

The clinical education component of our curriculum will provide opportunities for students to:

- 1) Learn in the clinical environment by applying knowledge, skills, and behaviors to practice; and
- 2) Assess personal and professional strengths and limitations relative to practice

We believe the clinical education component of our program will prepare our graduates to:

- 1) Use entry-level practice skills in a safe and effective manner; and
- 2) Understand the practice context in which those skills are used

The individuals participating in the clinical education experiences include the student, the clinical instructor (CI), the site coordinator for clinical education (SCCE), the Director of Clinical Education (DCE), and the academic faculty.

The curricular design of the clinical experiences, as stated previously, was based on the recommendations of the APTA as outlined in the Normative Model. The Normative Model has described several principles for the development of the clinical education component of the physical therapist education program. These principles include issues in the area of: communication between the student, CI, SCCE, DCE, and academic faculty; the length and timing of clinical experiences, logistical issues in implementation of clinical experiences; guidelines for student, CI, and facility evaluation; and resource and funding issues. The clinical experiences have been designed with these principles in mind to ensure that students participate in clinical education experiences that are diverse, high-quality, effective, and efficient; and that the FIU Physical Therapy Department and clinical facilities in the community have mutually beneficial working relationships.

This relationship is an asset to the physical therapist educational program in many ways. In addition to providing quality on-site training to students, expert clinicians in the community are invited to deliver specific lectures to the students in the course of their didactic training. Clinicians from Jackson Memorial Hospital, Mercy Hospital, Baptist Hospital, Doctor's Hospital and many other hospitals in the community have delivered guest lectures, or organized student learning experiences to provide a link between the

academic program and the clinical community in South Florida.