

SPORTS PHYSICAL THERAPY CURRICULA IN PHYSICAL THERAPIST PROFESSIONAL DEGREE PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

Background: The specialty niche of sports physical therapy has grown at a significant rate over the past 40 years. Despite this growth there is little information or direction from the physical therapy education accreditation body or professional association to guide academic programs on the interest or necessity of this type of practice content in physical therapy professional degree programs.

Purpose: The purpose of this survey study is to report on the prevalence, attitudes, barriers, resources, and faculty expertise in providing required or elective sports physical therapy course work.

Study Design: Cross-sectional descriptive survey

Methods: A 57-item questionnaire with branching logic was distributed via a web-based electronic data capture tool to survey all Commission on Accreditation for Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) accredited and candidate schools in the United States. Response data was analyzed to describe typical educational program profiles, faculty demographics, and correlational factors consistent with the presence or absence of specific sports physical therapy curricular content.

Results: Thirty one percent of the schools responded to the survey and the program demographics were consistent with all currently accredited schools in regards to their geography, Carnegie classification, and faculty and student size. Forty three percent of programs offered a required or elective course distinct to the practice of sports physical therapy. Descriptive information regarding the sequencing, curricular make-up, resources, and assessment of content competence is reported. The odds of providing this content nearly doubles for programs that have faculty with sports clinical specialist credentials, accredited sports residency curriculums, or state practice acts that allow sports venue coverage.

Conclusions: This survey provides an initial overview of sports physical therapy educational efforts in professional physical therapy degree programs. The data can be used to spur further discussion on the necessity, structure, and implementation of education content that is inherent to a growing specialty practice in the physical therapy profession.

Level of Evidence: 4, Cross-sectional descriptive survey design

Key words: Accreditation, clinical specialization, entry-level education, sports physical therapy

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