



Looking Through the Eyes of a Physical Therapist



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Service Site

Central Maryland Rehabilitation center is located in Columbia, Maryland as part of the eastern chain of Physiotherapy Associates' clinics. As an outpatient rehabilitation center, it strives to offer all kinds of therapy including: sports injury, hand, occupational, musculoskeletal, and aquatic therapy. The mission of Central Maryland Rehab is to work closely with each patient and individualize a therapy plan that is unique to each patient and circumstances so that they may achieve their goals. As a whole, Physiotherapy Associates and its facilities want to empower their patients that come into the clinic and make them more prepared to go out into the world and achieve their goals. I spent most of my time inside the main clinic, but I also went to their off-site Aquatic Therapy center, a part of the Howard Community College campus.



Picture Courtesy of:
http://www.lhup.edu/yingram/jennifer/webpage/knee_goniometry.htm



Central Maryland Rehabilitation Center
6300 Woodside Court, Suite E
Columbia, MD 21046

Activities

On my first day, I shadowed Terri who specializes in patients with vestibular issues and general balance issues. Aside from that, Terri and I also worked with "wildcard" cases. Transverse Myelitis and Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease were two very special therapy cases that I was able to observe during my time at CMR.

I also shadowed Patrice who works with sports injuries. The majority of patients coming into the clinic with that type of injury suffered from joint problems. Shadowing Patrice, I got to see a lot of patients coming fresh from orthopedic surgery. Now, many orthopedic surgeons use arthroscopy on knee and shoulder joints to give patients a faster recovery time and less invasive surgery. At CMR I used ultra sound on the patients fresh out of surgery. The deep heat from the ultra sound increases blood flow and softens spasms underneath the skin. Actual therapy sessions for patients with joint problems meant repetitive motions and intense massaging to break up scar tissue.

Future Work

I plan to pursue a career in physical therapy. My current major is kinesiology, with a minor in Human Development because I am considering working with children. I think that this is not only fascinating, but also helpful in creating a healthy lifestyle for me. As a physical therapist, I will be equipped with the knowledge of the body and how it works, which includes aging and proper techniques to maintain the moving body. With this career, I plan to give back to the community. The world of physical therapy and the different body-coping mechanisms are changing but I am hopeful and willing to make an impact in this field.

Issues Confronting the Site

As of December 2007, the country was declared in recession. Because of this, people are cutting back spending in all aspects, regardless if it affects their health or not. Physical therapy is a recession-proof job, however, a substantial amount of patients have cancelled or stop coming since last year.

I was able to sit in on a staff meeting with the head clinic director. He explained that patients enrolled in CMR therapy sometimes may not have health insurance or have expensive co-payments depending on what their insurance covers. Central Maryland Rehab doubles as a fitness center for patients to come in and exercise, so they have other sources of income as well. All physical therapists are CPR certified and are able to teach certification classes. A lot of people that are seen by Physical Therapists have already been treated and discharged, but come back to prevent future injuries. Due to the fall of economy in late 2007 and 2008, many people have cut themselves from their physical therapy and are now self-treating.

Impact

I spent two weeks at Central Maryland Rehab, getting to see what actually goes on in the day of the life of a physical therapist. Something I now know that is a necessity for this job description is patience. The PTs at the CMR clinic saw on average 10 patients a day with varying problems. Not only did they have to work one on one with each patient, their day was not complete until they finished and submitted paper reports on each patient's progress.

This service learning project has extraordinarily impacted me. I was able to see what it was like to actually work full-time in an outpatient clinic. My favorite part of this experience was seeing patients progress on a day to day basis. I made great relationships with all the patients I encountered. Being at CMR was like working with a family; patients were greeted on a first name basis and gave daily updates on things that were happening in their lives. Being able to help someone do something that they want to do and enabling them the physical strength to overcome their injury is why I love the world of physical therapy. On your feet all day, the day seems so long, but at the end of it, it's totally worth the experience.



Stretching a patient's knee joint

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