

Clinical Exposure

Randy Christensen

PTA 1010
Introduction to Physical Therapy

October 24, 2011

Clinical Exposure

Introduction

My observation of a clinical setting in Physical Therapy was completed at Meier and Marsh Professional Therapies in West Valley City with Wade Meier, PT CHT. Wade Meier is the only Physical Therapist at the West Valley Clinic, with the company owning and managing two other clinics in Tooele, each with one Physical Therapist. The opportunity to watch, learn from and help Wade in his clinic was a gratifying and eye-opening experience.

The Physical Therapy Clinic

Preparing for the observation, my main concern was to locate a Physical Therapy clinic close to my home for convenience. However, what I found was not only a clinic near my home, but a great clinical setting with a great Physical Therapist. Wade Meier has been practicing Physical Therapy for over 30 years and also is a clinical instructor with the University of Utah Physical Therapy program. With this experience, Wade was extremely helpful in showing many different aspects of Physical Therapy and started each observation session with the question, "So what are we going to learn and discuss today?" This question and the accompanying answer helped create an immediate positive learning environment and allowed me to be exposed to many concepts that I would have otherwise not thought to discuss.

The Meier and Marsh facility is located on a busy street, but near neighborhoods, including my own, which allows the patients to obtain care quickly and conveniently. The clinic is inviting and open. The staff is very cordial and knows each of the patients by name and, as I observed over the three weeks, knew about their interests, work, and family lives. The staff took pride in caring for not just the patient's illnesses or injuries, but the patient's overall wellbeing. The openness of the treatment center made these interactions possible. The equipment is spread throughout the main room with large front windows bringing natural lighting, making the facility inviting and patient friendly. The Physical Therapy tables are lined along the back walls for more privacy with the exercise and strengthening equipment in

the center and front of the room. The side opposite the reception and administration desk is where the three evaluation rooms and massage therapy room are located. These rooms allow for the examination, evaluation, diagnosis, and prognosis of each patient to be conducted privately, yet allowing for easy access to the rest of the clinic.

As documentation is a vital part of Physical Therapy practice, the administration desk is conveniently located slightly above and has a full view of the rest of the clinic to allow Wade Meier an opportunity to observe the patients working through their assigned plans of care but at the same time work on documenting the care of each patient. As needed the Physical Therapist can easily move from the desk to the patient and help them correct or change what they are doing. I found this to be quite effective as to help keep the documents up-to-date and accurate, but balance the administration time with the time spent with each patient. Many hours are spent to keep the records accurate.

Ethics of Patient Care

As a new patient came in to receive physical therapy, the receptionist would cordially welcome them to the facility, hand them some new patient forms and show them to the waiting area. The forms helped the patient describe their symptoms confidentially. Once the forms were filled out the receptionist took the sheets and carefully entered in the information into the database, including payment information such as insurance, Medicare or Worker's Compensation. The owners had decided they would treat each patient regardless of the ability of the patient to pay for the service, feeling it is better to help those in pain then turn away those who could not pay. Wade explains they do not advertise this to the public as this could potentially make the clinics not profitable. He said they are fully aware this places them in a difficult spot of trying to balance the clientele that can pay with those who cannot. However, he says as they have stuck with this policy, the majority of the patients can pay and they are able to give back to the community by helping those less fortunate. He takes pride in being able to help anyone return to full or best function, regardless of the compensation.

The new patient is shown into one of the examination rooms and waits for a short period of time to be seen by the Physical Therapist. Wade also described another standing rule in the clinic of not allowing the patient to be waiting to be seen for very long. The longest I observed a new patient waiting in an examination room was about four minutes, with most less than a minute. Wade, along with the staff, was able to balance the patient load appropriately. I was able to help get things setup, clean up the equipment and retrieve a needed item to help speed things along when it was busy.

In the examination room, Wade would ask the patient to describe each of the symptoms and would explore with the patient the history of the problem and ask clarifying questions as needed to better understand what the patient's conditions were. After the patient had described this, Wade would begin to assess and diagnose the problem. He would run some of the tests and measures to be sure his hypothesis was correct and adjust it as he discovered new information. He would then discuss with them the plan of care, including the exercises, potential duration of care and prognosis of the patient. He was always teaching the patient about anatomy, the need for the patient to be fully engaged in their treatment and the reasons behind each of the treatments the patients was prescribed. This was all done in the confidential examination room.

Each patient was treated kindly and sympathetically as Wade worked with the patient. He made it as though they were the only patient there, even when there were six or seven patients receiving care. He was effectively able to move from patient to patient and ask how their plan of care is working, how they are feeling and whether the care is being successful. The patients each appeared comfortable to speak about their symptoms and feelings openly with Wade. Wade considerately listened and then thoughtfully responded with understanding and ideas that would possibly help the patient. As he worked with each patient, Wade taught the patient about their diagnosis and prognosis. At times, the patient was asked their opinion about what they thought should be done and Wade would consider the suggestions. If a patient felt more comfortable doing the stretches or exercises they were prescribed in

private, they were allowed to go into one of the open exam rooms to do them. I found that Wade would never pass judgment on any of the patients and would treat each with dignity.

Overall Impression of the Profession

Observing Wade Meier in his clinic helped me to understand the concepts that have been discussed in class. He first made me feel comfortable, asked about my experience and needs during the observation period and would answer any questions I had. Each day I came to the clinic, Wade would ask, "So, what questions do you have today?" or "What are we going to discuss this afternoon?" I was impressed that he not only was attentive to the patients and me, but also to the business of running a Physical Therapy clinic. He incorporated my questions with the treatment of the patients and would bring in some of the issues pertaining to the administration of the clinic.

Wade is very passionate about Physical Therapy and the opportunity he has each day to help others feel better and progress back to full function. He understands the importance of listening in order to understand the feelings of the patients. He truly wants to assist each one in the way they need; he does not make a one-size judgment for all patients. Physical Therapy is even more dynamic of a profession than I thought before the observation. Each day was filled with new challenges, which makes each day a unique experience. Wade said he was drawn into the profession for this reason. He feels that with each patient there is a mystery to be solved and likens the examination, diagnosis and prognosis portions of the job as a crime scene investigator piecing together the evidence at a scene of a crime.

Wade's son, Jordan, works at the facility as an aide, helping Wade complete the tasks that are needed to give care for each patient. The three-person team, Wade, Jordan, and the receptionist, Kate, work cohesively together to make the experience and atmosphere of the clinic calm and as enjoyable for the patient as possible. Massage Therapy is also offered as a separate service by an on call Massage Therapist. Great detail is given to ensure the time spent by the patient in this therapy is recorded and charged correctly. Wade states that this really becomes another way to make his clinic even more

valuable to the patient and says they are almost giving this service away for free. In this way, Wade and his partner, Troy, have integrated their values into the practice and the patient care.

Wade emphasized the importance of being engaged with the various professional organizations, both locally and nationally. He taught me that being involved helps him stay up with the latest research information, the issues that Physical Therapists face and also be able to network with other professionals to be aware of new concepts for treatment. He also stressed the idea of finding a focus in Physical Therapy (he is a Certified Hand Therapist) and using that focus to become more valuable to the clinic.

Impact of Experience

I was impressed with the organization of the clinic, their focus on each patient and their desire to help the patients gain relief and function. Because of my experience, my wife is now going to Physical Therapy at the Meier and Marsh Professional Therapy clinic. I recognize that it is not only the education that is important but the integration of what I learn into my life and how I interact and treat others. Wade's impressive ability to teach me and open new ideas to my view, made an impact in my decision to not only pursue a career as a Physical Therapist Assistant, but continue with my education and become a Physical Therapist. He gave me great insight into the difficulties of the journey ahead, but gave me hope that I will be able to do that which is required. As I continue in my schooling, I will value the things I learned from Wade and remember how he so professionally ran his clinic and practice.