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Graduate

Physical Therapist Graduates’ Perceptions of the Sports Performance Concentration on Employment and Practice  
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Opportunity

- There is currently pressure within the physical therapy community to pursue post-professional education and to further specialize within the field. The sports performance concentration is designed to provide an opportunity for those students interested in working with athletes to be better prepared for the sports physical therapy field upon graduation. Surveys were dispersed via email to a list of 70 graduates of the Sports Performance Concentration at Northeastern. Open-ended interview questions will be presented to the Northeastern University Sports Performance Concentration alumni, whom have elected to be interviewed, which will allow the participants to fully explain their answers. Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and interview data will be analyzed using inductive thematic coding analysis. Results of the survey and interviews will provide data for program coordinators to improve concentration curriculum to meet the demands of preparing for practice in sports physical therapy. Results show where graduates of the program are employed, offering insight into whether the concentration curriculum was effective in providing a foundation for graduates to further pursue sports physical therapy certifications or employment.

Approach

- Mixed Methods Approach: survey with follow-up video/phone interview based on subject consent
- Survey consists of 25 multiple choice and free text questions
- Interviews will consist of 19 scripted questions and will be recorded for accuracy
- Initial pool of 70 participants (23 respondents to date)
  - Target Sample: Northeastern University Physical Therapy Sports Performance Concentration Graduates
  - Exclusion Criteria: physical therapist’s who did not graduate from Northeastern University and did not complete the Sports Performance Concentration
  - Age, gender, ethnicity/race, socioeconomic status, literacy level and health were not considered to be relevant to use as either inclusion or exclusion criteria

Data or Results

- 78.26% of current respondents have earned additional certifications post graduation
  - 77.78% of those certifications were a CSCS (Certified Strength and Conditioning Specialist)
  - 33.33% have or are in the process of earning an ATC (Certified Athletic Trainer)
- 69.57% reported working the majority of the time in an environment described as either “sports, professional sports, sports/orthopedics, sports medicine, or outpatient sports medicine”
- 54.55% reported they did NOT receive emergency training as part of the sports performance concentration curriculum
- 58.33% are not considering a sports residency while 20.83% are considering, currently in, or have completed a sports residency
  - Other graduates have chosen to pursue an athletic training degree instead of residency

Impact

- The unique feature about our research is that the results will help to determine the effectiveness of the sports performance concentration in regards to preparing graduates for practice in sports physical therapy
- This study helps to address the controversy of whether or not concentrations should be implemented into physical therapy degree programs
- Results obtained regarding the perceived value of the different components of the concentration will guide the sports performance coordinators when making adjustments to the program in terms of classes, clinicals and additional sports physical therapy experiences offered

What components of the Sports Performance Concentration best prepared you to work in a sports performance setting?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of Sports Concentration</th>
<th>Mean Rank of Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sports PT Clinical Rotation</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports PT Observation</td>
<td>3.19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managing the Injured Athlete Class</td>
<td>3.43</td>
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<tr>
<td>Athletic Training Room Observation</td>
<td>3.91</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports Specific PT Project</td>
<td>5.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principles of Strength and Conditioning Class</td>
<td>5.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Athletic Game Coverage</td>
<td>5.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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References available upon request