

# Exploratory comparison of students' and clinical instructors' report of frequency and importance of professional behaviors during clinical education affiliations

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## Introduction

Professional behavior characteristics are important to maximize student learning during clinical education affiliations. There are many professional behavior characteristics that Clinical Instructors may utilize in order to be effective physical therapists and teachers. Emery and Wilkinson studied the perceived importance and frequency of clinical teaching behaviors as they considered surveys of students, clinical instructors and center coordinators of clinical education [1]. Many themes emerge when studying professional behaviors in physical therapy [2]. The purpose of this study was to explore the comparison of students' and clinical instructors' report of importance and frequency of professional behaviors during clinical education affiliations.

## Methods

Using the clinical instructor characteristic statements developed by Emery and Wilkinson [1], a survey was developed on Survey Monkey®. It contained 43 statements about professional behaviors used in clinical education settings. The survey was sent to 142 clinical instructors (CIs) actively serving as CIs and to 118 students while on their various clinical affiliations. The CI was asked to self-report the importance of each behavior and the frequency with which she or he demonstrated the behavior using a 5 point Likert scale. The student was also asked to report their belief of the importance of each behavior and the frequency with which the CI demonstrated the behavior on the same scale.

## Results

Sixty CIs and 76 students completed and returned the survey resulting in a 42% and 64% return rate respectively. Characteristics rated the top in importance by the CIs included: point out student performance discrepancies, plans effective learning experiences, perceives self as extension of academic program, defines specific objectives for the experience. Characteristics rated the top in importance by the students included: CI points out performance discrepancies, CI is extension of academic program, CI demonstrates professional behavior, CI provides unique learning experiences, CI schedules regular meetings.

Characteristics demonstrated with the highest frequency according to the CIs included: questioning/coaching in a way to facilitate student learning, providing a variety of patients, pointing out discrepancies

in student performance, explaining the psychological basis of PT evaluation, making yourself understood. Characteristics the CI demonstrated with the highest frequency according to the students included: pointing out discrepancies in your performance, questioning/coaching in a way that facilitates learning, explaining psychological basis of PT evaluation, providing unique learning experiences, observing performance in a discreet manner.

When comparing student and CI perceptions of frequency, both groups gave high frequency to pointing out discrepancies, coaching that facilitates learning, and explaining the psychological basis of PT evaluation. They differed when rating providing a variety of patients, providing unique learning experiences, observing performance in a discreet manner, CI consistent extension of PT program, CI manages time well.

## Conclusion

Both CIs and students report observing "pointing out discrepancies in student performance", "coaching in a way that facilitates learning", and "explaining the psychological basis of PT evaluation" with the highest frequency. Further research should be done to compare student and CI reports to determine what professional characteristics are the most important and how to empower CIs to demonstrate that characteristics frequently when supervising student physical therapists.

## References

1. Emery M, Wilkinson CP (1987) Perceived importance and frequency of clinical teaching behaviors: surveys of students, clinical instructors and center coordinators of clinical education. *J Phys Ther Educ* 1: 29-32.
2. Phelan TL (2014) Professional Behavior In Physical Therapist Educational Programs: Perspectives of Selected Senior Faculty. *The Internet Journal of Allied Health Sciences and Practice* 12.

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**Received:** May 17, 2016; **Accepted:** June 22, 2016; **Published:** June 24, 2016