



PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANT PROGRAM ALUMNI NEWSLETTER FALL 2018

PTA PROGRAM UPDATE

Volunteer Lab Assistants

Over the past two fall semesters, PTA 210 (PTA Techniques) has had a handful of physical therapists and physical therapist assistants volunteer their time to act as lab assistants on various Fridays. These local clinicians (including alumni and clinical instructors) have provided the PTA learners with additional feedback and connections with their lab material with current clinical practice.

Field Trip to Next Level Physical Therapy

Over the past two fall semesters, learners enrolled in PTA 201 (Therapeutic Exercise) have collaborated with a local physical therapy facility in Robbinsville, NJ for an off-campus small group learning experience. This field trip encourages learners to communicate with practicing clinicians prior to entering the first clinical education course and provides them with additional small group instruction in entry-level manual PT skills.

Nursing Collaboration

Professor Kaiser collaborated with the Nursing Program's Professor Dunn to pilot a PTA-Nursing Intra-Professional Learning Experience. Nursing students oriented the PTA learners to the nursing simulation lab, including equipment typically found in a hospital room. Nursing students role-played a clinical scenario as patients, nurses and observers, while the PTA learners engaged the patient in a treatment session. PTA learners benefited from the collaboration with other students within the health professions division, the exposure to a simulated hospital room, and practice with clinical decision making in a complex and uncertain situation. PTA learners have expressed immense gratitude for this learning experience and the learners participate in this opportunity in the fall and spring semesters.

http://www.mccc.edu/news/2018/general/Nursing_PTA_Lesson.html

PTA CLASS OF 2018 PROJECTS

PTA Club 2017-18:

During the spring 2018 semester, students in the PTA Club canvassed the West Windsor campus, documenting areas of accessibility including parking spaces, automatic doors, elevators, and accessible bathrooms. The PTA Club provided their findings to the Graphic Design club on campus, who is in the process of creating an accessibility map for use on the college's website. This will enable people visiting the West Windsor campus to view the accessibility map to advanced information pertaining to accessible areas on campus.

http://www.mccc.edu/news/2018/general/PTA_GraphicDesign_MapProject.html

PTA PROGRAM ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENTS

Amira Elgoneimy, PTA, Class of 2010

If you came to me in 2010 and told me that I would be doing so much more with my PTA degree from Mercer County College than being a clinician, I'd never believe you. I've been fortunate enough to be able to hold a PTA license, which has always been in demand. For the last 8 years, I have been able to work in a hospital in both inpatient and outpatient settings, ensuring I never get bored. One of my latest roles has been as an on-site reviewer for CAPTE (Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education). Every PTA program requires accreditation from CAPTE in order for their students to sit for their state licensure exam. Once programs receive accreditations they need to renew their accreditation about every 6-10 years. The Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education sends on-site reviewers to PTA/ DPT schools around the nation to verify that they follow all the standards set forth by the organization. I've been fortunate to visit different parts of the country I'd probably never visit if it wasn't for this role.

So what is my role exactly? I get to visit different campuses in a different state for three days. On my visit I help verify that a program is following or able to demonstrate an active role in ensuring the standards are met. On my trip I work in a team of 3, and we sit with the academic personnel, current and past students, clinical instructors, even current employers of graduates of the program to ask questions to help ensure the longstanding success of PTA program in the community they serve. I learn a great deal on each site visit, and as I network, I'm able to truly see all aspects of different programs and their strategies that I may one day share with another program to help problem solve a lingering issue. Its rewarding on so many levels and the dynamics of different PTA programs intrigues me constantly.

If I'm being truly honest it also helps calm my wanderlust itch. I love to travel, truly I love it! I love seeing different parts of this large country, always insisting on eating the local favorites and visiting the towns' local prides. I serve on a team about 2 to 3 times a year, and always pick locations I've never visited to add to the excitement. My last stop was Idaho, and I know what you're thinking, Idaho?! Yes, Idaho, and I know for a fact the odds of me ever going to Idaho would be slim to none otherwise. All of this would have never happened without my PTA degree from MCCC and I am truly thankful for the program and for all its extra rewards I've been able to experience besides being a respected clinician.

PTA PROGRAM ALUMNI IN CLINICAL EDUCATION

Damilola Kalejaiye, PTA, Class of 2015:

My experience working with Physical Therapist Assistant students from Mercer County Community College (MCCC) has been a rewarding one. The students I've gotten the opportunity to work with were fantastic, they showed great professionalism to all patients that were under their care and demonstrated that same level of professionalism to other staff members in the healthcare team of RWJ Hamilton Hospital. The students from MCCC showed the exceptional ability to think outside the box, displayed a boldness in the face of adversity that are sometimes encountered in the acute hospital setting and they also demonstrated a great level of empathy to every patient encountered. I learned a great deal from the students of MCCC, and it was exciting to give back to these students as much as I could in guiding them on how to succeed in working in the hospital setting. The PTA students received from MCCC demonstrate leadership qualities that always set them apart from other students doing their clinical rotations at RWJ Hamilton Hospital, they seem more prepared, more open to challenges, very apt to receiving constructive feedback and demonstrate fantastic adaptability that is required to work in the hospital setting.

PTA PROGRAM ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

As a graduate of the PTA Class of 2012, I've had a chance to look back on the experience. Although there were many ups and downs of getting into the program, getting through the program, and finding the right job, MCCC provided an excellent opportunity for me to learn something new as a second career.

Having found my niche in aquatics at Robert Wood Johnson in 2013, I sought out courses to enhance my skills. Over the next couple of years I earned my Certified Aquatic Fitness Trainer through Aquatic Therapy and Rehab Institute (ATRI) and a Certificate in Aquatic Physical Therapy Clinical Competency (CAPTCC) from APTA.

When Barbara Behrens approached me to teach the PTA Aquatic Lab class, I didn't hesitate to say yes. I was excited and honored to be asked. While expanding my aquatic skills I realized how good it was for patients, and sharing that experience is a way to give back. The students may never treat in the aquatic environment, but just having an understanding of the difference between aquatic exercise and aquatic therapy may help to offer patients an alternative form of therapy.

Giving back to the program not only helps the program and its students, but it has given me a sense of accomplishment. And hey - it looks good on the resume!

Barbara Veas, PTA, ATRIC

Barbara is the owner of AquaZen Wellness, LLC where she is expanding on group classes in the wellness community and teaches aquatic classes at a Continuing Care Retirement Community and local fitness center. She has presented at both the APTANJ conference and CSM in New Orleans.

NEWS FROM MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

New Dean for the Health Professions Division:

Our previous Dean of the Health Professions division, Dr. Robert Schreyer, PT, DPT has moved into the role of Assistant to the Vice President of Academic Affairs. The Health Professions division is once again looking for a new Dean to lead the health professions programs housed in the division. A search committee has been established and the search has begun. In the meantime, the Director of Nursing, Elizabeth Mizerek, is acting as Interim Dean.

Health Professions Student Success Center:

The Health Professions division just opened up a new Student Success center specifically designed for health professions students. It is located on the first floor of the Math & Science building and PTA learners are excited for the opportunity to utilize the space. It contains computers, a microscope, tables, white boards, anatomical models and books and a treatment table. It also contains goniometers, reflex hammers, stethoscopes and blood pressure cuffs. We plan to add additional items such as a wheelchair, various assistive devices and a rolling stool. We anticipate that our PTA learners will find this additional study space very useful.

Senate, No 1265:

The NJ legislature passed a new mandate that all community colleges that award associates degrees in NJ must not have more than 60 credits in their degree programs and all colleges that confer baccalaureate degrees have no more than 120 credits. The deadline for the implementation of this change is fall 2019. We have been working diligently to ensure that the PTA Program is exempt from this mandate and we will keep you informed as we learn more.

PEEK INTO THE PTA LAB



GIFTING OPPORTUNITIES

The Yarema Boskyy PTA to DPT Scholarship

As many of you know, one of our very own Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) Program alumni passed away this year. His name was Yarema Boskyy, he was 25 years old, and many of us called him Jeremy. After graduation, he worked as a PTA at Mercer-Bucks Orthopedics while continuing his studies. He earned a Bachelor's Degree from The College of New Jersey and his Master's Degree from New York Institute of Technology. Jeremy was one year away from earning his Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) degree. The "***Yarema Boskyy PTA to DPT Scholarship***" is available to students who enroll in a Doctorate of Physical Therapy program any time after graduating from the PTA Program at Mercer County Community College.

Please submit your gift with the attached form or, if you prefer, you can make your gift online at www.mccc.edu/give. When making an online gift, be sure to select "Other" and specify that you are making your gift to the "Yarema Boskyy Scholarship Fund".

The PTA Program Scholarship

The PTA Program offers leadership and academic excellence scholarships to graduating PTA students annually. Current fundraising efforts include selling water bottles in the PTA lab and selling "identabling" ID holders on campus. These scholarships are awarded to students who demonstrate excellent leadership skills and excellent performance on practical examinations during their time in the professional phase of the PTA Program. For information regarding contributing to this scholarship fund, contact Professor Barbara Behrens at BehrensB@mccc.edu

FROM THE FIELD

Hi everyone!

I would like to start by saying that this career choice (PTA) has been the most rewarding career I could imagine. I am a grateful graduate from the summer of 2012!

That said; let me give you some insight into the pediatric setting. I have worked in two different pediatric outpatient settings. I worked for one of the largest pediatric rehabilitation organizations in the northeast and I now work for a small private facility in Florida, dealing with children ranging in ages from 1 month to 21 years of age. Diagnoses range from autism to torticollis to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) which includes strokes, heart attacks, motor vehicle accidents, concussion and spinal cord injuries (SCI). Also, CP (cerebral palsy), which is the most common, SMA (Spinal Muscular Atrophy), DMD as well as various kinds of cancer and of course the broken leg, arm and other orthopedic problems.

The thing that is unique about pediatrics is that you can't just say to a child "Ok let's do push-ups" or "ok do 10 squats" That isn't happening! SO... you have to find playful ways to encourage strengthening and movement. You might say that pediatric PTs/PTA's are devious lol! We say things like "Can you go over there and get me a bean bag?" or "Go get the car on the top of the stairs" or "I bet I can jump higher than you can!"

I have to continually be careful to analyze gait patterns, looking at the way the trunk rotates – or doesn't, watching how the pelvic complex rotates and moves, realizing what will be possible and what may never be possible. Working a small infant through normal developmental sequences; rolling transitions (supine<->prone), assuming the quadruped position to learning creeping. Taking simple tasks apart – like stepping up/down stairs, getting on/off a chair, riding a bike or jumping rope – and working on the individual pieces to bring them all together to make the whole.

I have been lucky enough to have spent 5 years working as an integral part of a serial casting team. This process involves applying a "removable" cast from the tibial plateau to the toes. This is done to gradually- usually over the course of 6 weeks- to improve the actual length of the gastroc/soleus complex, which has tightened and created a toe walking pattern. The casts are removed every 6 days and the child comes back on the 7th day for a new cast in a slightly improved ankle position. This allows for a more normal, heel-toe gait pattern, increasing balance and hopefully allowing for the appropriate motor recruitment. The bulk of children that this applies to are in the CP or autistic population. I also worked closely with the in-house orthotist to support the best final outcome. The orthotists usually play a very important role in pediatric rehabilitation and I happened to work with a brilliant guy who taught me so much! Additionally, I have gained a keen understanding of assistive devices – not just wheelchairs – but posterior or anterior gait trainers, forearm crutches and other devices designed to improve mobility and function. I have to know what is and isn't appropriate and when to introduce it into my sessions.

In pediatrics the diversity of interventions to best fit the diagnosis tests me each and every day. You learn something new or consider new things every day. Vestibular interventions have helped me understand how best to integrate and improve proprioception and motor coordination to improve functional balance and body awareness. Working on thoracic mobility has been an especially unique intervention that I have not only studied and learned about but I now TA (teaching assist) for the woman who is the "guru" with this style of therapeutic intervention. This particular technique is actually applicable for all populations! Have you ever really looked at your patients when they exercise? I'll bet 80% of them hold their breath! I can tell you that the learning process has never ended. When I read an evaluation about a diagnosis that I'm not familiar with, I hit the books (or Google... LOL!) That Neuro Intervention text and most of that required reading from my time as a student continues to be referenced. On a daily basis Holly's words ring in my ears, "paint a picture of the patient when you write your note" To say that note writing has become my nightly hobby might help you understand just how detailed pediatric note writing is, it's not an exaggeration to say that 2-3 hours of a normal day are spent writing notes. My "defensible documentation" has been tested a few times and I've been told many times that I do a great job describing my patients and the notes are very professional. (Thanks Holly and Barbara!)

I must give the bulk of the credit to the amazing group of PTs/OTs who have fostered so much of my growth. Without the patients, kindness and willingness to answer my questions, I am certain I wouldn't be at the level that I am. Finally, THANK YOU, Holly and Barbara for the encouragement and education. You are all the best!

I hope this small window into the field of pediatrics encourages you and give you a glimpse into what a wonderful field this is.

Missy Pittenger, PTA Class of 2012