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Using the ICF as a model for improving student participation in their professional organization

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In 2011, approximately 65% of PT students were American Physical Therapy Association (APTA) members with even less participating as actively engaged members. Given this limited engagement, improved strategies are required to elucidate the benefits associated with professional involvement. Barriers to student engrossment in the APTA anecdotally include expense, lack of time, and decreased awareness of opportunities. To address these barriers, a conceptual framework, modeled after the International Classification of Function (ICF), was developed to demonstrate linkages between related concepts in the process of professional growth. Students explored this new professional development model simultaneous to their education on the ICF. Both models embodied a similar visual structure and “ablement” focus.

Use of a graphic, interconnected model allowed students to appreciate the opportunities associated with professional development and reinforced the multifaceted and individualized nature of establishing goals and maximizing outcomes. For example, the model demonstrated how “PT interests” (affinity to a specialty or practice setting) directly influence “PT-related activities” (opportunities reflective of professional goals), and further elucidated how mere “activity” attendance is not “participation” without active engagement and value recognition. The model further demonstrated how individual interests can impact activity selection which, in turn, can facilitate ongoing participation within the activity or organization. Through use of similar precepts to the ICF, this development model provided a useful and vivid depiction of the factors most influential in the establishment and obtainment of professional goals to ultimately promote involvement within the professional organization. Applicability to other rehabilitative professions is most probable.

Biography

Cathy Ciolek has a bachelor's degree in physical therapy from Ithaca College and DPT from AT Still University. She has been board certified as a geriatric clinical specialist since 1996. She is an assistant professor and director of clinical education at the University of Delaware where she teaches geriatrics and principals of adult education and learning theory. She was recently awarded the Lucy Blair Service award from the American Physical Therapy Association.

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