

Sarah Manning
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Observation Reflection

Shadowing Experience

My thoughts on the practice of physical therapy are that it is a wonderful career. It saves people from having to do surgery, yet also helps those who have already had surgery, to have a quicker and better recovery. Physical therapy may look easy but there is a lot of science behind why they move the patient a specific way or have the patient do certain exercises. Physical therapy can also provide the recovery steps that people don't consider, or won't do on their own. I have heard many individuals say they don't take the time at home to do their exercises, so instead they go to physical therapy 3 times a week to ensure they are getting stronger and more flexible. It seems to be a growing field because the population is living longer, and I think physical therapy will gain even more momentum as the years go on.

I had the opportunity to shadow Brian Bay at Mountain Land Rehabilitation in Holladay. Brian specializes in temporal mandibular joint disorder, but I mostly observed patients recovering from sports injuries, surgeries, car accidents, and back injuries. I observed a few people that had injuries just from running. They did lots of exercises with bands where they would wrap the band around their foot, flex their foot up and down, and then side to side which helped strengthen and increase range of motion (ROM). They also did toe pick-ups which I thought was funny because I had never seen them done before. Brian explained they use this technique to reduce pain in the ball of the foot and toe cramps. Another common thing I saw done was they would stand on a foam square and close their eyes. This was used because it

helped them increase their balance, as well as, helped the deep stabilizer muscles to get stronger. Brian was great at explaining and I learned far more than I ever anticipated.

My overall impression of the profession and practice of physical therapy is it seems very rewarding and fun. There is not many dull moments because you are either with a patient or filling out paper work. The atmosphere was enjoyable because it was productive, yet relaxed, and very personable. I love that everything is hands on, and that the PTs are always moving around. It is a fun upbeat environment because the PT sets the patient up for success and everyone in the clinic cheers them on. I like that physical therapy is designed where the PT has one on one time with all of their clients. This helps the PT establish better relationships so it is easier to know what to do for the patient, plus the PT gets a better idea of what the patient is going through.

The ethics of patient care at Mountain Land Rehabilitation was excellent. They showed a genuine care and respect for all clients. They made a point to always ask the patient if it was ok to talk about their background in front of me, so they wouldn't embarrass or upset the patient. I never heard them violating HIPPA, and their records were kept confidential. Their language was professional, even when we were in the break room. They have a good value system and remarkable behaviors at this clinic.

This clinical exposure impacted me for my career in physical therapy because now I am 100% confident in this career path. It was honestly everything I hoped it would be. Being around the people and seeing them improve each time they came to therapy, made me leave there so happy each time. I feel a little overwhelmed of the knowledge and skills I will have to have, but I can see that the hard work to get there will be well worth it.

It was stimulating to integrate the knowledge I had into the clinical setting and understand how this all relates. In class we learned what goes on in an evaluation, and how to set up a SOAP note. While shadowing I was able to observe 4 evaluations. The evaluations were some of my favorite experiences, because I got to know the patient's whole story. We discussed the patient's history, where they were having problems, what type of pain they were experiencing (burning, sharp, aches), and what makes their pain better/worse. Next, they did measurements to see where their ROM was at. Knowing what ROM stood for also helped me in the clinic, and I got to see the PT perform PROM on a lady who had shoulder surgery 6 days before she came to therapy. Lastly, the PT would type up the SOAP note, in the professional format, and show me the finished product.

It was encouraging being around and observing someone already in the field. Brian's love for physical therapy was particularly motivating and he kept me wanting to try even harder in my anatomy class so I could keep up and know exactly which muscles we were working on with each exercise. Being in a clinical setting really puts things into perspective such as why we need to learn so much anatomy, and why we need to stay up to date on all the issues/practices. From shadowing a physical therapist, and observing the day to day life in their clinic, it inspires me to try my hardest in school so I can become a physical therapist assistant.