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History of the Department of Physical Therapy

University of North Dakota

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA
1883-2008
CELEBRATING 125 YEARS

HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL THERAPY

Physical Therapy Faculty and Staff
I. The Beginning

On November 3, 1967, the Board of Higher Education of the State of North Dakota indicated approval of Physical Therapy as a four-year curriculum under the School of Medicine, University of North Dakota. With this approval, the Board of Higher Education set in motion the mechanism for development of one of the most highly respected educational programs at the University of North Dakota.

Prior to 1967, the Board of Higher Education had approved a basic degree, the Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy, at UND. This action occurred in 1964, and was a curriculum model which consisted of a three-year pre-Physical Therapy program at the University with the transfer of the student upon successful completion of that program to a Physical Therapy certificate program at some other institution. Upon successful completion of the certificate program, the student was awarded the degree of Bachelor of Science in Physical Therapy from the University of North Dakota. This program was initiated in the College of Arts and Sciences in 1964. On July 1, 1967, Henry C. Wessman was hired as the first Chairman of the Department of Physical Therapy. Mr. Wessman moved with his family to Grand Forks from the St. Paul area, where he had taught, for the five preceding years, at the University of Minnesota School of Medicine. Under his direction, the Program in Physical Therapy was transferred, in August, 1967, from the College of Arts and Sciences to the School of Medicine. The Department of Physical Therapy was established in the School of Medicine at that time, and the curricular plan for a "self-contained" Physical Therapy Degree at the University of North Dakota was formulated.

During the 1967-68 school year, Professor Wessman worked in the clinical Department of Physical Therapy at the Medical Center Rehabilitation Hospital, McCannel Hall, during the day, and researched and wrote Physical Therapy course outlines and objectives during the off-time evening hours. His beginning salary, $12,000 per year, was funded entirely by an Allied Health Professions Basic Improvement Grant from the Division of Allied Health Manpower of the Bureau of Health Manpower Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare. During that important first year, the curriculum was developed with the full knowledge of, and assistance from, the American Physical Therapy Association and the American Medical Association, Department of Allied Medical Professions and Services.

An important part of establishing the Physical Therapy Program at the University of North Dakota was evidenced in the contributions which the initial Advisory Committee gave to the Department. The advice and encouragement of these people, together with their willingness to assist the Department in establishing the curriculum, laid the groundwork for the ultimate development and success of Physical Therapy at UND. People who were instrumental in assisting the program to develop included Kenneth L. Koch, past Administrator of the Medical Center Rehabilitation Hospital; T. H. Harwood, M.D., who was Dean of the School of Medicine and Director of the North Dakota State Medical Center at the time the program was initiated; William Koenker, Ph.D., who was Vice-President for Academic Affairs at the University of North Dakota; Margaret Davenport, Administrative Assistant to the Vice-President for Academic Affairs; Shirley Naismith, Registrar's Office; Donna Bruce, Admissions; President George Starcher, Ph.D., UND President in 1967; Ralph Kolstoe, Ph.D., Department of Psychology; Amy Lind, Ph.D., Department of Occupational Therapy; John J. McLeod, Jr., M.D., surgeon at the Orthopaedic Clinic; and Dr. Stan Brumleve and Dr. Carl Zogg, Department of Physiology.

Because the practitioner in Physical Therapy is a licensed entity, and because licensure requirements demand that the potential practitioner be a graduate of an accredited program, the Department of Physical Therapy at the University of North Dakota developed early liaison and communication channels with the American Physical Therapy Association and the American Medical Association the two professional bodies that sponsor accreditation in the field of Physical Therapy. In 1968, Ms. Beth Phillips, the Director of the Educational Department of the APTA, visited UND as a guest of the
Department. During the visit, much valuable information was provided for the program. In October, 1969, the Department received its first on-site accreditation visit by a team representing the American Physical Therapy Association in collaboration with the American Medical Association. That visit resulted in the initial accreditation of the Department of Physical Therapy at the University of North Dakota. The Program underwent subsequent reaccreditation visits on the normal five year cycle, one visit occurring in 1975 and another occurring in 1980. In both instances, the Program was given continued full accreditation by the American Physical Therapy Association in collaboration with the American Medical Association.

From a financial standpoint, the Department began with a 1967-68 total budget of approximately $13,700. The 1982-83 budget for the Department calls for $248,174. Throughout the 16-year history, the Department has been quite successful in capturing training grant funds. One of the innovative concepts developed by the Department of Physical Therapy, which served to solidify its position as a truly regional training program for Physical Therapists in the upper Great Plains area, was the development of specific Contracts with the States of South Dakota and Wyoming. Those Contracts had many advantages - they assured the contracting states that they would have six, each, seats in the highly competitive Program in Physical Therapy at the University of North Dakota, while at the same time assuring UND-PT that it would have a specified number of clinical affiliation sites in each of the states that will be available to all UND-PT students for full-time affiliations. In addition, under the arrangement of the Contracts, the Department of Physical Therapy received a specific amount of funding generated by the Contracts, thus assuring a stable source of income for further program development. The South Dakota Contract was established in 1975 and the Wyoming contract began in 1980.

There have been several Clinical Physical Therapists, and persons from other specialties from Grand Forks, and from around the State of North Dakota, who have contributed on a voluntary basis to the Department of Physical Therapy, lending their expertise in the classroom and clinic to provide the UND-PT student with the optimum of clinical/didactic educational mix. Some of these individuals include: Kenneth L. Koch, past Administrator, Medical Center Rehabilitation Hospital; Allen M. Rud, past Chief, Physical Therapy, Medical Center Rehabilitation Hospital; Al Fandrich, PT, Lawrence Eickman, PT, Chief, Prosthetics and Orthotics, Altru Hospital; and Dale Brekke, Orthotist. It is particularly important to note that it was Ken Koch, who was Chief of Physical Therapy at the Medical Center Rehabilitation Hospital in 1966, was instrumental in contacting the Chairman and arranging for the initial visit to Grand Forks which resulted in the beginning of the program. He was assisted in this recruitment effort by Don F. Barcome, M.D., Medical Director of the Medical Center Rehabilitation Hospital and T. H. Harwood, M.D., Dean, School of Medicine. Those two physicians later served as the nucleus for educational input, from a medical standpoint, during the early days of the program, together with the physicians from the Orthopaedic Clinic, particularly Dr. John McLeod, Dr. John Beaumier, Dr. Bob Richards, and Dr. Ben Clayburgh. Dr. Harry Butler, a neurologist at the Rehabilitation Hospital at that time, also provided tremendous input from a neurology standpoint.

II. Faculty and Staff


In 1968, Betty Mowbray Young had the initial responsibility of typing all of the lecture material, the class schedules, admissions, and all other documents pertinent to the Department. Mrs. Young was with the Department full and part-time from 1968 to 1981. In 1975, the Department secured the services of Alyson Campbell White. Mrs. White provided the business expertise and administrative knowledge needed by the Department. Alyson continues with her role in the present Physical Therapy Department. In 1989 Betty Ann Sveinson began working in the Department. In addition, Janet Dallman (2004) and Sherri Johnson (1997) are also employed as support staff to the Department.

There have been several other staff personnel who were of major assistance to the Department including: Kathleen Stroup, Secretary, Lorraine A. Wessman, Karen J. Smith, Ann Udland, Linda Ziegelmann, Lorna Pesek, Michelle Jechart and Debbie Larson.

The total program would not be complete if it were not for the all-important clinical affiliations which are provided to the UND-PT students. Each student must complete a minimum of approximately 1440 hours in clinical experiences. The Department currently has over 300 clinic contracts in 27 different states. The clinics provide the ultimate test of the ability of the student/product to perform in a "real life" setting. The Department could not function without these affiliations. Because of this, the Department maintains very close ties with these clinical sites, and the highlight of the communication is the biennial Clinical Supervisors' Conference which the Department hosts for Clinical Supervisors.

III. The Field

The first U. S. Physical Therapy Department was established at Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D. C. in 1916. For the next five years, there were some 14 schools of Physical Therapy open throughout the country, with the physical therapist being known as a "reconstruction aide." In 1921, the American Women's Physical Therapeutic Association was formed. Later that year, the name was changed to the American Physiotherapy Association.

In 1979 there were 80 accredited bachelor degree programs in physical therapy. In December 2001, the APTA stopped accrediting bachelor degree programs and at the present time only master or doctoral programs are being accredited. The University of North Dakota, having gained accreditation prior to the graduation of its first class in 1970, was the 51st program to be accredited in the U.S. As of June 2002, there are 193 accredited programs in Physical Therapy in the U.S.

Today, the profession of physical therapy is moving towards doctoral education for all entry-level graduates. The American Physical Therapy Association's Vision Statement for the year 2020 includes the following statement: "By 2020, physical therapy will be provided by physical therapists who are doctors of physical therapy". It is estimated that all PT programs will be at a doctoral level by about 2010.

III. The Program

B.S.P.T. Degree. The first BSPT degrees were awarded in 1970 to a graduating class of nine, the last BSPT degree was awarded in 1992.

M.P.T. Degree. On June 23, 1989 the University of North Dakota was authorized by the North Dakota State Board of Higher Education to award the Master of Physical Therapy (MPT). This authorization followed the required approval by the Department of Physical Therapy, the School of Medicine, the Graduate School, the University Senate and the Provost at the University. On October 9, 1991 the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education granted Interim Accreditation status to the MPT program at UND. CAPTE accredited the MPT program on May 1, 1996. The first class of entry-level MPT students was in 1994 with a class of 46 students.
D.P.T. Degree. The North Dakota State Board of Higher Education gave final approval for the Doctor of Physical Therapy degree at the University of North Dakota on January 17, 2002. In April, 2002 the DPT program was interim accredited by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. The first class of entry-level DPT students graduated in May 2005. In April of 2007, the Department received full accreditation of the DPT program for a period of 10 years. The next accreditation visit is scheduled for 2016.

In addition, the Department began an online transitional DPT program for practicing physical therapists in Spring of 2004 and graduated 50 students from that program in May of 2005. A second (and last) cohort of 34 students began in January of 2006 and will graduate in December of 2007.

IV. The Students

The real strength of the Program can be found in the high quality students admitted to the professional program. Admission into the Program in Physical Therapy has always been competitive and is dependent on a personal interview, grade point average, and personal reference letters. At the present time students need to complete at least 90 credits of both required and elective general education requirements before being admitted to the professional DPT program.

In 2000, the Program graduated its 1000th student. Although a large number of the graduates remain in the Upper Midwest, the program has alumni throughout the entire United States. The WICHE program has had a very positive impact on the program in terms of diversity and recruiting power. This along with the large number of clinical experiences in a number of different states has helped the physical therapy program receive national recognition as one of the top physical therapy programs in the United States.

VI. The Future

Given the solid base of support that is enjoyed academically, administratively, clinically, and philosophically by the Department of Physical Therapy of the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, it can be anticipated that the future for this Department is indeed bright. Combining that stability with the excellent job outlook currently enjoyed by Physical Therapy, it is easy to anticipate that UND-PT will continue to have a high demand for admission from students in the future. The challenge to UND-PT will be to maintain the quality and the excellence that it has demonstrated over the past thirty-two years, both in student selection and in academic preparation and to move ahead with a doctoral program while still maintaining the very essence of the program; "provision of quality practitioners in Physical Therapy to meet the health needs in states like North Dakota".