

Hand Therapy Certification Commission 2007 Exam Preparation Survey



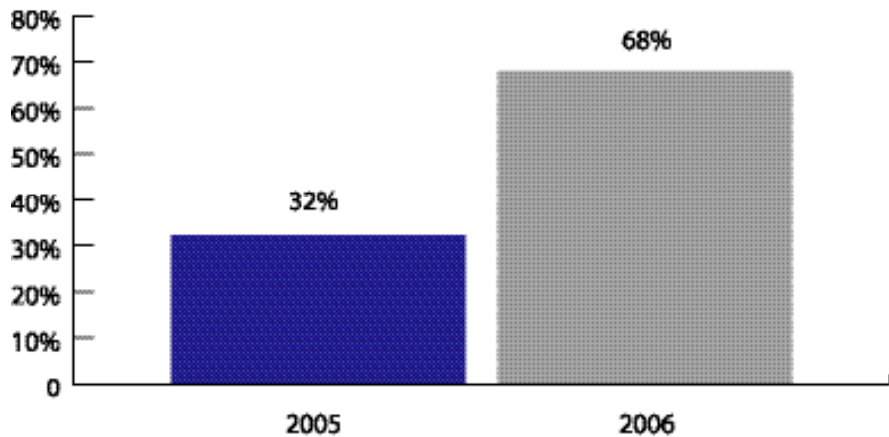
Overview

In 2007, HTCC conducted a survey of therapists who passed the Hand Therapy Certification Examination in 2005 or 2006 to gather information about how successful candidates prepared for the examination, so that future candidates might benefit from their advice. Email invitations were sent to 653 therapists and 254 completed the survey.

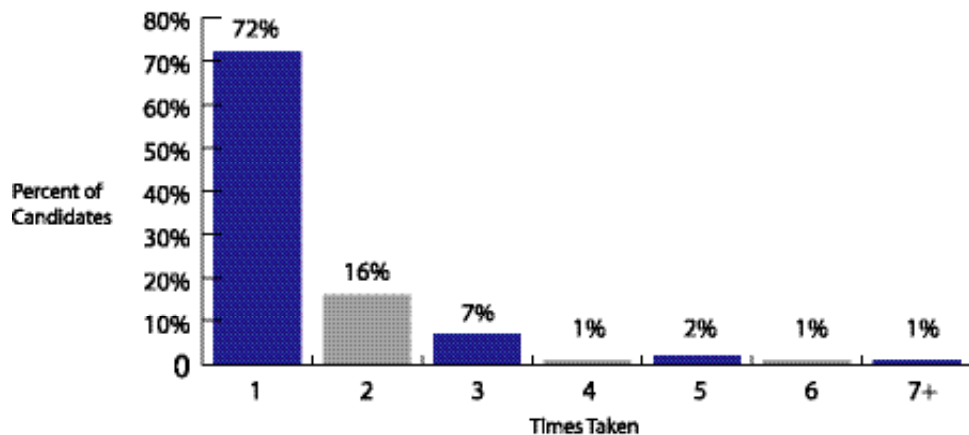
Disclaimer: HTCC is providing aggregated survey data to be used only for informational purposes. HTCC does not endorse, promote, review, or warrant the accuracy of any information provided, nor by providing this information does HTCC suggest, directly or indirectly, what study methods should be used, nor does HTCC imply that following the suggested methods will result in successful passage of the CHT examination.

The Survey Questions & Answers

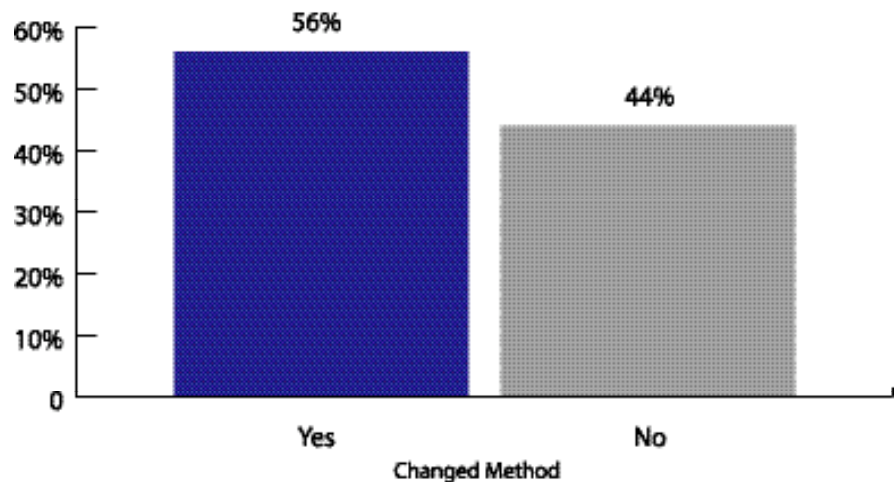
1. In what year did you pass the CHT Exam?



2. How many times did you take it before you passed?



3. If you took the test more than once, did you change the study methods you used in the year that you passed?



4. What did you do and how was it more effective?

Participating in study groups, finding a study partner, taking a review course, using practice exams, making and using flashcards, studying *Rehabilitation of the Hand*¹ and *Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review*² were mentioned by many candidates as being more effective than their previous methods. Some candidates took the hand rehabilitation courses at Samuel Merritt College³ and Drexel University⁴. Other comments included:

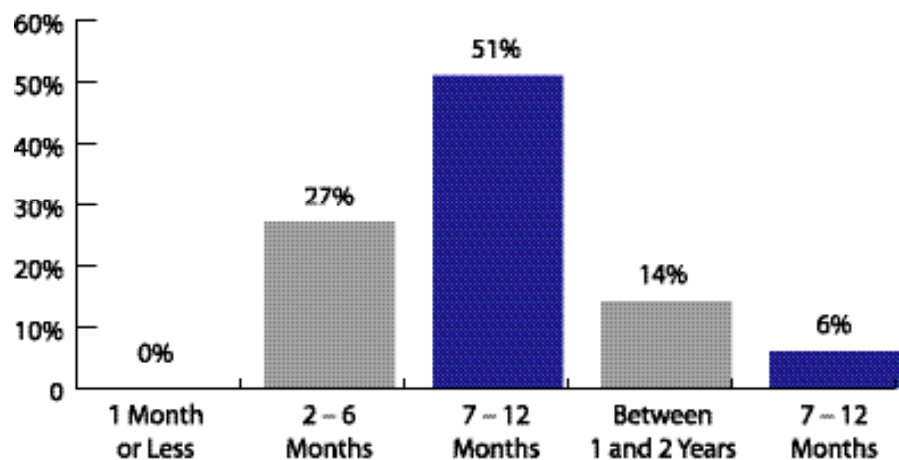
- ▶ I had more experience as a hand therapist – sure I had my hours signed off the first time I took my exam, but that was only in a general outpatient setting seeing CTR all day long. Doing a fellowship and finally getting to work in a hand center was a big help.
- ▶ I bought testing samples to ease test anxiety.
- ▶ After the first test, I decided that anatomy, anatomy, anatomy was the most important thing to learn, as knowing which muscles are where and innervated by which nerve really helps to problem solve on many of the questions.
- ▶ Focused less on protocols and more on anatomy.
- ▶ I changed jobs to work for a hand surgeon to get more clinical experience.
- ▶ I focused more on practice tests to become more familiar with how to read questions and pace myself.
- ▶ I joined a study group for the third round and we established a monthly outline and meeting (via telephone or in person). We also did many practice tests together over the phone. It was not only helpful to have the clinical support, but it was invaluable to have a partner to go through the process. I am an OT who has worked alone my entire career in hands and it has been a difficult process not having in house support or a CHT mentor to guide my study process.
- ▶ I was fortunate enough to take the one year hand therapy course at Samuel Merritt and that gave me the courage to sit for the exam. Additionally, for this last test I really studied all of the basics well and I didn't waste my time on studying obscure information or second guessing the test. This was one of the keys factors in finally passing the test. The information is in front of us, it is just a matter of putting forth the time to cover it all.
- ▶ I participated in a study group. It was much more effective because I not only learned from reading but also from discussing and problem solving with others.
- ▶ I purchased practice exams online and also studied online with a partner (we came up with weekly test questions as a review). I really felt that the practice exams were helpful. I also looked up all the answers to the questions I answered incorrectly and I really think that helped me a lot.
- ▶ I studied 1 to 2 hours each evening, rather than several hours on the weekends.
- ▶ I studied concepts more that tried to memorize protocols.
- ▶ I studied professional journals to better understand research methods and terminology.

4. What did you do and how was it more effective?

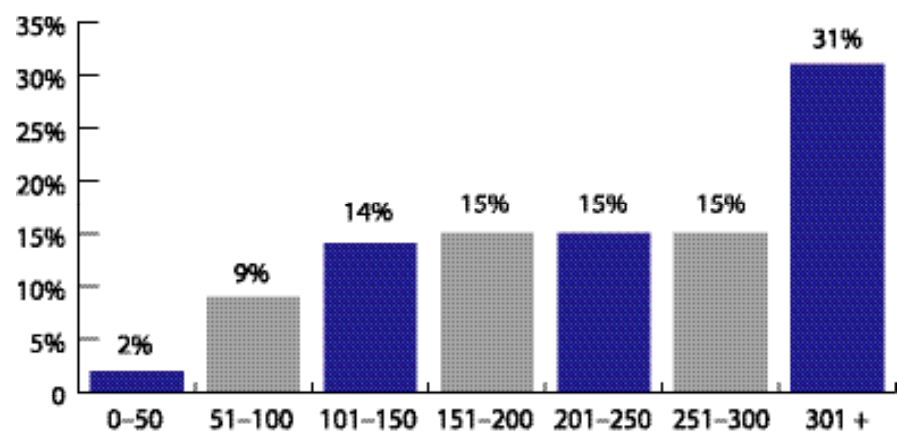
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- ▶ I switched jobs. I was able to spend more time learning from the physicians and worked with an experienced hand therapist.
- ▶ I tried to get more hands on time with diagnoses that I wasn't as familiar with and worked in a clinic with more varied diagnoses.
- ▶ I was studying on my own the first time and just on weekends. The second time, I had a study group with 3 OT's and we met once a week, wrote questions to quiz each other, and had a specific outline to follow month to month to keep us focused.
- ▶ Increased the amount of work experience and more study time!
- ▶ Studying by diagnosis vs. reading chapters in recommended texts

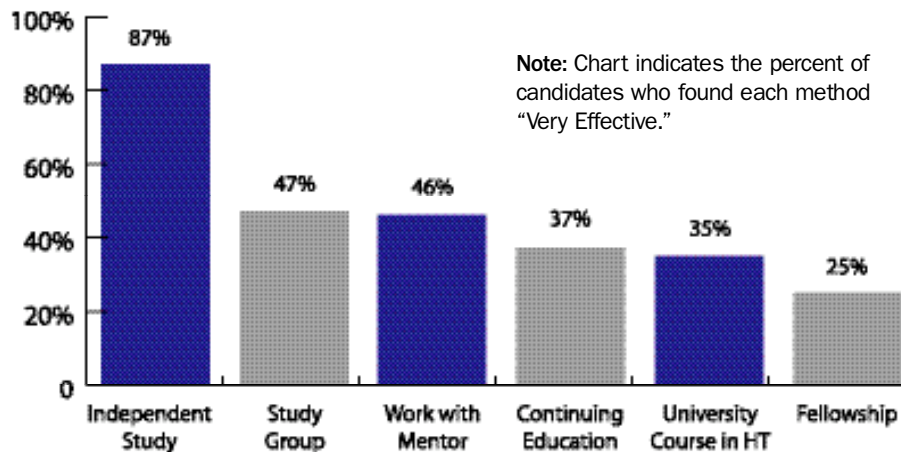
5. Approximately how long before the test did you start studying?



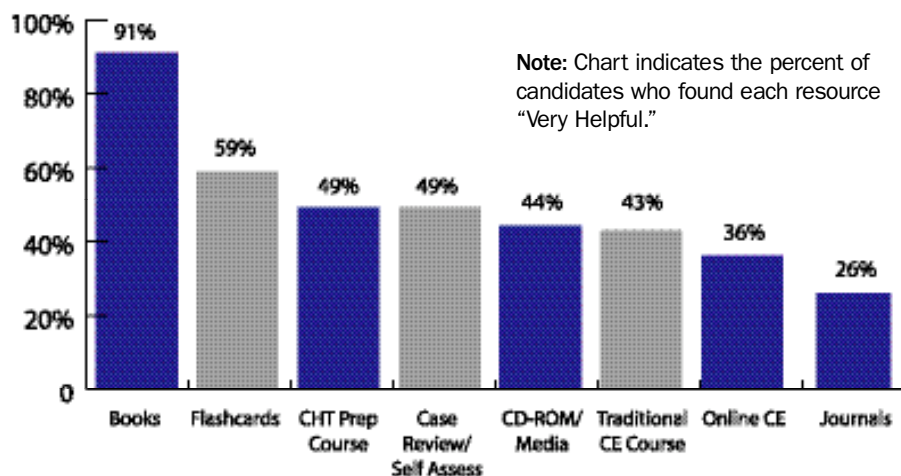
6. Approximately how many hours did you study in the year you passed?



7. Please indicate the method(s) you used to prepare for the exam in the year that you passed and rate its effectiveness.



8. Please indicate the resources(s) you used to prepare for the exam in the year that you passed and rate their effectiveness.



Comments on Resources Used

Books

Books were the highest rated study method and were used by 100% of the candidates. Top rated books include: *Mackin's Rehabilitation of the Hand*; *Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review* (also sometimes referred to as "The Purple Book"), *Hand Secrets*⁵; *Diagnosis & Treatment Manual for Physicians and Therapists*⁶; physical agent modality books, and anatomy books.

Flashcards

About three-quarters of the candidates used flashcards in their study. Although there are commercial sources for flash cards, therapists noted the value in them was related to writing them out and reviewing them at every opportunity. Some comments were:

- ▶ After reading chapters in each topic (i.e. tendons, nerves) I created my own flashcards to review new or important concepts.
- ▶ Great way to learn anatomy
- ▶ I made my own flashcards on items that I felt weak on. I carried those cards everywhere and reviewed them every chance I could.
- ▶ I used Bryan Edwards Flashcards⁷.

Comments on Resources Used

(Continued)

Flashcards (Continued)

- ▶ My study group developed their own flashcards.
- ▶ I made-up quiz questions from the materials I reviewed and put them on flashcards.
- ▶ I am a visual learner, so flashcards were paramount for me. I organized them by topic and put them all over the house, car, at work, etc so I could review during any 'down time.'
- ▶ I had flashcards of flashcards!!! I carried these around me where ever I went and any down time, I would whip them out to prepare!!!
- ▶ I lived by my flashcards. I made thousands of flashcards in the year leading up to the exam and then spent the last 1-1/2 months studying all of them.
- ▶ I made flashcards from my notes taken in Rehab of the Hand. This was the best tool for me!
- ▶ I made flashcards of questions that I missed on self assessments.
- ▶ I made flashcards on my laptop and found this very helpful. Also put post-it notes with key info I really needed frequent review of on my desk.
- ▶ I made my own "Black Book" tablet. It consisted of about 150 pages of "nuggets" and bits/pieces that I thought were important. I used this primarily the last week of my preparation, so that I wasn't panicking trying to look at new books and search thru new resources.
- ▶ Each card had a muscle on the front and on the back were the origin, insertion, action, and innervations.
- ▶ I made my own flashcards and filed them in a card file by subject. Whenever I had a free moment at work/home I'd review a section.

Prep Courses

The most frequently mentioned preparation courses were: **Hand Therapy Certification Study Module** CD-ROM and ASHT Prep Course for the CHT exam⁸, both from the American Society of Hand Therapists (ASHT), **Basics and Beyond**⁹ from Exploring Hand Therapy, and the Drexel University Hand Therapy Certificate Program. All courses were rated somewhat to very helpful.

Case Review or Self-Assessment

Although less than half the candidates reported using case review or self-assessment to prepare, those who did found it an effective method. Online practice tests were mentioned as being useful by a number of candidates. Other comments included:

- ▶ I attended hand clinic with the hand surgeons whenever I could.
- ▶ I reviewed cases with a physician.
- ▶ Clinical experience is the best study tool.
- ▶ Our study group did case reviews.
- ▶ I studied everything I could about each of my patient's conditions. A number of questions were answered from that method.
- ▶ I reviewed the cases in the **Journal of Hand Therapy**.
- ▶ Hand Pearls has case studies.
- ▶ I had the luxury of having access and treatment planning coordination with CHT's that worked with me in the clinic.
- ▶ I took as many practice tests as I could. After I thought I knew a certain body of knowledge, such as wound care, I would take the test in the "purple book," the interactive hand CD-ROM (from AOTA), maybe a test at the end of a journal article, the CHT prep manual and some tests that other study groups had previously written.
- ▶ I took the exam the first time in 2004, and I used that as a self assessment of what I was weak in, then based the bulk of my study in those areas.
- ▶ I observed surgery at our facility.

Comments on Resources Used

(Continued)

CD-ROM and Other Media

About 80% of the candidates used a CD-ROM or other media and the majority of them found it to be somewhat to very helpful. Recommendations included:

- ▶ I used www.eatonhand.com for good pictures of muscles, innervations, etc.
- ▶ I used *Acland's DVD Atlas of Human Anatomy: The Upper Extremity*²⁰.
- ▶ *The Hand: An Interactive Study for Therapists*²² from AOTA was very helpful in the early stages of my studying. I used it to develop my flashcards.
- ▶ The *Interactive Hand* and the *Interactive Shoulder* from Primal Anatomy (www.primalpictures.com)
- ▶ Practice tests bought from Exploring Hand Therapy
- ▶ Ken Flowers wrist tapes – essential!! (To order, contact Ken at kenflowers@ob1net.net)
- ▶ I purchased the ASHT *Comprehensive Survey of the Hand* which was probably one of the best choices for studying and an excellent starting point for more in depth learning.
- ▶ Hand Therapy and Anatomy CD-ROMs
- ▶ George Davies shoulder CD-ROM
- ▶ Doctor's Demystify the Brachial Plexus (www.doctorsdemystify.com)
- ▶ *Diagnosis and Treatment Manual for Physicians and Therapists*
- ▶ Comprehensive Review Course DVD from the American Society for Surgery of the Hand (ASSH) (www.assh.org)
- ▶ I used websites: Wheelless' Textbook, *Electronic textbook of Orthopaedics* from Duke University (www.wheellesonline.com) the *Electronic Textbook of Hand Surgery* (www.eatonhand.com) and then I would Google and find all kinds of things.

Traditional Continuing Education

Again, about 80% of candidates attended continuing education meetings in preparation for the examination, with about three-quarters of them finding it to be somewhat or very helpful. The courses were varied, from those presenting an overview of the upper quarter, to courses with content very specific to an anatomical location or diagnosis. The mostly commonly mentioned courses were:

- ▶ Annual meetings of the American Society of Hand Therapists (www.asht.org)
- ▶ ASHT Comprehensive Survey of Hand Therapy Course (www.asht.org)
- ▶ Canadian Orthopaedic Upper Quadrant Courses – Levels I-III (<http://orthodiv.org>)
- ▶ Comprehensive Management of the Wrist & Hand from North American Seminars (www.healthclick.com)
- ▶ Courses and workshops presented by Shrikant Chinchalkar (www.rehabed.com)
- ▶ Doctors Demystify Courses (www.doctorsdemystify.com)
- ▶ Hand Care courses sponsored in even years by the Hand Rehabilitation Center of Indiana (www.indianahandcenter.com)
- ▶ Hand Therapy Symposium, sponsored annually by the Philadelphia Hand Foundation (www.handfoundation.org)
- ▶ HandLab courses presented by Judy Colditz (<http://handlab.com>)
- ▶ Kaiser Permanente hand therapy course and fellowship
- ▶ Ken Flowers's courses, especially on the wrist (www.handcommunity.com)
- ▶ Samuel Merritt University's year-long hand course (no longer offered)
- ▶ Teton Hand and Upper Extremity Conference in Jackson Hole, WY (www.tetonhandconference.com)
- ▶ Texas Women's University (TWU) Hand Therapy Fellowship (www.twu.edu)
- ▶ Wisconsin Hand Experience courses (www.asht.org)

Online Continuing Education

Only about one-third of the candidates took online courses to prepare for the exam. In addition to those already listed, courses from Hand Credits (<http://www.onlinece.com>) were recommended.

Comments on Resources Used

(Continued)

Journals

About 60% of the candidates reviewed journal articles in preparation for the examination. *The Journal of Hand Therapy* (www.elsevier.com) was listed almost exclusively by the respondents. Although candidates appeared to read a variety of articles, they noted the special issues, the information on research, and anatomy-related articles were particularly helpful. One respondent said, the journal "has great detail and is relevant to practice." Some candidates found the Read for Credit quizzes to be helpful.

The Journal of Orthopaedic and Sports Physical Therapy, the *American Journal of Hand Surgery*, the *British Journal of Hand Therapy*, and *Hand Clinics* were also mentioned as good journal resources. Some therapists also participated in journal clubs, which they found useful.

General Tips

A number of suggestions were made to make studying more fun and to reduce stress, such as keep your sense of humor, study while you exercise, "don't take it too seriously – it's only a test," get plenty of rest, "have a CHT on speed dial for encouragement," have a supportive spouse/family, "keep a book in the bathroom," make up lots of funny mnemonics and stories to help with memorizing, take Friday or Saturday night off for relaxation, don't plan a wedding or have a baby the year you take the test. Relax and enjoy life learning.

Other suggestions were more practical:

- ▶ Study a little bit daily vs. marathon study sessions
- ▶ Apply concepts to real people
- ▶ Ask co-workers to spot quiz you on specific cases
- ▶ Cross-reference sources by topic
- ▶ Do not cram; commit at least 6 months for studying
- ▶ Don't get too detailed - get the overall concepts
- ▶ Do not study obscure information
- ▶ Focus on areas that are your "weakness".
- ▶ Focus on learning the material and the concept - not memorization
- ▶ Use the HTCC Blueprint as a starting point – it tells you what you need to know for the test
- ▶ Keep track of the questions you answered wrong on practice tests
- ▶ Know your own study habits, don't worry about others
- ▶ Record information on MP3 to listen to
- ▶ Study new concepts/evidence based practice
- ▶ Read, read and read
- ▶ Study in a quiet place
- ▶ Do not solely focus on the practice exams
- ▶ Fabricate a personal "CHT study guide" binder
- ▶ Find a challenging work environment
- ▶ Try to observe surgery
- ▶ Incorporate your current caseload into your studies
- ▶ Keep reviewing previously studied materials
- ▶ Keep a notebook with items you found difficult
- ▶ Know healing timelines for structures/protocols
- ▶ Know the how's of modalities as well as the whys
- ▶ Know the protocols, but also the clinical reasoning behind them
- ▶ Review manual therapy books

General Tips

(Continued)

- ▶ Muscle test everybody!
- ▶ Remember the importance of research
- ▶ Study alone and phone a friend with questions.
- ▶ Take a study leave (4 hrs/week) if you can – it is invaluable
- ▶ Think global, big picture
- ▶ Don't be afraid of splinting
- ▶ Study anatomy
- ▶ Work with a mentor
- ▶ Take practice exams
- ▶ Establish a timeline
- ▶ Draw brachial plexus/anatomy

Finally, candidates made suggestions for the day of the test:

- ▶ Rest before the exam, eat a good breakfast
- ▶ Don't try studying the morning of the test
- ▶ Complete at least 50 questions every hour during test
- ▶ Don't panic
- ▶ Don't over-analyze the questions
- ▶ Don't second guess your answers

HTCC would like to thank to all the candidates who completed the survey. We think that their advice will be invaluable to future candidates. For more info mation about the CHT credential, please visit www.htcc.org or call 800-960-7097.

References & Contact Information for Suggested Resources

- ¹ *Rehabilitation of the Hand and Upper Extremity* (5th ed.), Mackin, E., Callahan, A.D., Skirven, T., Schneider, L.H., & Osteman, A.L. (Eds.). St. Louis: Mosby – 2002
- ² *Hand Rehabilitation: A Quick Reference Guide and Review and CD* (2nd Ed.). Falkenstein, N., Weiss, S. St. Louis: Mosby-Year Book, Inc – 2004
- ³ Department of Occupational Therapy, Samuel Merritt College, Peralta Pavilion, 450 30th Street, Oakland, CA 94609
- ⁴ Jane Fedorczyk, MS, PT, CHT, ATC, Coordinator, Programs in Hand and Upper Quarter Rehabilitation, Drexel University, 245 North 15th Street, Mail Stop 502, Philadelphia, PA 19102, 215-762-4680, Jane.Fedorczyk@drexel.edu
- ⁵ *Hand Secrets* (3rd Ed.). Jebsen, P & Kasdan, M. (Eds.). Philadelphia: Hanley & Belfus – 2006
- ⁶ *Diagnosis and Treatment Manual for Physicians & Therapists* (4th Ed.). Cannon, N.M. (ed). Indianapolis: The Hand Rehabilitation Center – 2001
- ⁷ Bryan Edwards flashcards and other flashcard systems for reviewing anatomy are available from Amazon.com. A link has been added to the HTCC website on the Exam Preparation Materials page in the Certification section <http://www.htcc.org/certification/certificationw.cfm>
- ⁸ American Society of Hand Therapists, 401 N. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60611, 312-321-6866, www.asht.org
- ⁹ *Basics and Beyond: A Comprehensive Study of Hand and Upper Extremity Rehabilitation CD-ROM*, Exploring Hand Therapy Company, 7991 9th Avenue South, St. Petersburg, FL 33707, www.exploringhandtherapy.com
- ¹⁰ A link to this DVD has been added to the HTCC website on the Exam Preparation Materials page in the Certification section <http://www.htcc.org/certification/certificationw.cfm>
- ¹¹ *The Hand: An Interactive Study for Therapists*, American Occupational Therapists Association, 4720 Montgomery Lane, PO Box 31220, Bethesda, MD 20824-1220, www.aota.org.