



HAND THERAPY SPECIAL ISSUE

DREXEL HAND THERAPY PROGRAM PREPARES STUDENTS TO SEE COMPLEX AND POST-OP PATIENTS



Dr. Jane Fedorczyk (left) creates splints with students during an on-site residency

The Drexel Certificate in Hand Therapy and Upper Quarter Rehabilitation Program is unique in both quality and format, providing busy practitioners with a blend of online, didactic and laboratory experiential components that allows them to pursue a higher degree while working, maintaining family life, and taking care of other responsibilities. "The combination of online and on-site makes for a very reasonable program for students to do while they're working full-time," explained Dr. David Ebaugh, a professor in the Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Sciences Department at Drexel University's College of Nursing and Health Professions. Dr. Ebaugh teaches the anatomy portion of the certificate program. Current student Melissa Sloop of Indianapolis, Indiana said, "Drexel's program worked out perfectly for me because I was able to work full time while I'm still taking classes."

In addition to being practical for working professionals, the program's on-site component takes place on Drexel University's campus in Philadelphia, which "is a kind of Mecca for hand therapy. We have some of the best clinicians and professors in the area that are contributing to the program, headed up by Jane Fedorczyk," said Terri Skirven, who is the Director of both the Hand Rehabilitation Foundation and the Philadelphia Hand Center. Dr. Jane Fedorczyk, the Director of the Certificate in Hand Therapy and Upper Quarter Rehabilitation Program at Drexel, is joined by faculty members Sheri Feldscher and Mark Walsh, both experts in the field who have decades of experience practicing hand therapy. "The hand therapy program has been designed and is taught by what I consider world-class hand therapists," added Dr. Gloria Donnelly, Dean of the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions.

The low residency format taught by world-renowned experts has proven to be a successful model. "The program prepares physical therapists or occupational therapists to be able to sit for the licensure exam. Students who go through our program and then take that have a superior pass rate compared to practitioners who don't do that. For those clinicians looking to ramp up their skills and make sure they're prepared for that exam, this program is great for that," Dr. Ebaugh continued. "It gives them a very solid foundation in the anatomy of the different regions that they will encounter with the patients that they're working with, the latest clinical treatments and interventions that are based on evidence, and it brings them up to the current literature." The certificate program also helps students develop and perfect splint-making techniques during the on-site residencies.

Therapists who want to see patients post-operatively or with complex hand injuries need to attend this program so that they can pass the licensure exam and have the evidence-based current practice knowledge, both of which will allow them to provide the highest quality treatments and interventions. "If you don't have that degree and that level of experience, you're really not going to be seeing that population," Dr. Ebaugh concluded.

STUDENT FROM SINGAPORE KNEW BOOKS ALONE WEREN'T ENOUGH



"Sometimes books cannot tell you the actual feel of how you touch a patient. For interventions, books tell you roughly what to do but there isn't a part that tells you how to touch, how many repetitions you have to do," said Un San ("Christina") Tai, an occupational therapist and current student in Drexel's Certificate in Hand Therapy and Upper Quarter Rehabilitation Program. Tai works in an academic institution in Singapore that sees many complex, challenging hand patients. Although she has been working in the area of hand therapy for six years, Tai hasn't always understood why she provides certain treatments and interventions. Now that she's midway through the evidence-based curriculum at Drexel, she comprehends the basic science that supports

interventions she's been practicing for years. "The science makes us able to convince patients to follow through on what you need them to do," she added. Tai's primary goals are to sit for and pass the international certification examination and to gather experience and information that she can bring back to her therapy colleagues in Singapore. Although hand therapists don't need to be licensed in order to practice in that country, her certification credential will go a long way in improving the reputation of her employer institution and in attracting and reassuring patients that they have come to a quality center with excellent therapists.

In her native Singapore, the best that a therapist can do to prepare themselves for a career in hand therapy is to try to acquire skills by reading available literature. Tai knew that she needed more than that. The on-site lab residency component is what ultimately drew her to the program at Drexel University's College of Nursing and Health Professions. She saw that the major differentiator between the Drexel program and the other American program she considered attending was the practical on-site experience that Drexel could offer.

"It's a long distance for me to travel but I find that it's worth it because here you're able to mingle with different therapists from all over the States and Canada. Every time I come here I learn something real and practical," Tai said. Acting as a sort of unofficial ambassador for Singapore, Tai plans to provide train-the-trainer workshops to help relay information and educate her colleagues, bringing them closer to the advancements in the field that are developing in the United States.

ODE TO EVELYN: WHAT THE MOTHER OF HAND THERAPY DOES FOR DREXEL STUDENTS



Evelyn Mackin (left) with student Jen Manning

"Evelyn Mackin is a true pioneer in her commitment to returning hand surgery and hand injury patients to full function of rehabilitation," said Dr. Gloria Donnelly, Dean of the Drexel College of Nursing and Health Professions. Mackin, now ninety years-old, is considered the "mother" of the hand therapy profession. She started the Hand Foundation, the peer-reviewed *Journal of Hand Therapy*, and the American Society of Hand Therapists. She was also instrumental in creating the International Federation of Societies for Hand Therapy. "Evelyn had her fingers in almost every important landmark event and organization that affects hand therapy. She has been a groundbreaking and important figure in the development of our profession," said Terri Skirven, who replaced Evelyn Mackin as Director of the Hand Rehabilitation Foundation.

Reflecting on how the hand therapy field has evolved over the years, Mackin said, "We no longer practice a cook book method. It's evidence-based practice now where we want to be sure of what we're doing for the patient. I think that's been the greatest improvement: the research. To increase the knowledge of therapists is a wonderful thing and I'm happy to be part of it."

Evelyn Mackin is very much a part of it. "She is the individual for whom the Evelyn J. Mackin Endowed Scholarship is named," Dr. Donnelly said. "Her commitment to education is exemplified by her personal contribution to establishing the endowment of the scholarship, which provides financial support to students and ensures Evelyn's legacy of academic excellence and compassionate patient care." We are grateful to Evelyn J. Mackin, her colleagues, acquaintances, and to alumni for their support of the scholarship fund. Their generosity allows our students to pursue this program and be an extension of Evelyn's important work in the field. This year's recipient of the Evelyn J. Mackin Endowed Scholarship is Jen Manning, a student from the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota.

SCHOLARSHIP ALLOWS STUDENT JEN MANNING TO PROVIDE HAND THERAPY ON RURAL RESERVATION



Jen Manning and her family

Jen Manning has a two-month patient waiting list for her therapy care in the health clinic on the White Earth Indian Reservation in Minnesota where she works. She is a current student in the Hand and Upper Quarter Rehabilitation Program at Drexel's College of Nursing and Health Professions.

"I often get generic diagnoses such as wrist pain or shoulder pain with absolutely nothing else to go by, so I have to really know my stuff to figure out what is truly going on with the person," Manning said. "At Drexel, I'm learning from the best of the best. I'm learning from the people that wrote the major hand therapy books so I know my patients are going to be getting top of the line, most up-to-date care."

Attending Drexel's Hand Therapy Program has been on Manning's "dream board" since she first learned about it in 2011 at the Philadelphia Hand Symposium. With seven children at home, she questioned whether she could pay for the program on her own and decided that even if she had to wait a couple of years in order to save money, she would find a way to attend.

Manning hoped that getting more training would increase her confidence as a therapist and help her successfully treat more hand patients in less time. Her hope has become a reality.

Manning was awarded the Evelyn J. Mackin Scholarship to help her pay for the program. She is the second recipient of the scholarship that benefits students of academic merit and financial need who wish to pursue a post-professional degree in hand and upper quarter rehabilitation. The scholarship was named for Evelyn J. Mackin, PT, a friend to the College and to hand therapists around the world.



The White Earth Health Center

"I wanted to help therapists who had a passion for hand therapy who wanted to increase their knowledge," Mackin said. "I was especially happy that the scholarship was established in my name and that it will afford the opportunity to therapists that want to increase their knowledge of hand therapy."

Manning wants to prove that the care in her reservation clinic is just as good as therapy care in any other clinic. The Indian Health Service Clinic at White Earth is federally owned and the patients receive free healthcare from the government. "People often think that because it's free, the care is substandard or that they can't afford to get good therapists in there, and I'm kind of out to prove them wrong," Manning said.

She grew up on White Earth with her parents. Manning now lives off-site, but her heart is still focused on bettering the reservation. She said that younger residents often move away to the mainland after their education, leaving the reservation behind. She wants to end this trend by showing adolescents how rewarding and enjoyable it is to work at home. "My passion for what I do has already gotten a couple of teenagers interested in looking at therapy as a profession. Hopefully they'll come back to the reservation to work because we can definitely use more therapists. We are few and far between here," Manning said.

"I am only in my second semester at Drexel but know that I have made a very wise decision in attending. I am already noticing a difference in my efficiency and effectiveness in treating patients," Manning said. "I am feeling more confident in my skills and more confident that I am providing my patients with current best practices."

DREXEL CONNECTIONS CHANGED AN ALUMNA'S CAREER



"The program really made a big difference in my life. It changed my career path," began Gayle Severance, a 2004 graduate of the Drexel Certificate in Hand Therapy Program. "I was working in hand therapy because the person doing hand therapy at my workplace left. I was folded into her position but didn't have guidance or mentorship. I was going through self-study." After building the foundation of knowledge and experience she needed in the Drexel Certificate in Hand Therapy Program, Severance applied for a new job working with a large staff that included more hand therapists. "The program opened that door for me, helped me go on to get my CHT, and helped me become a much more skilled hand therapist." Today, Severance works as a hand therapist for the Good Shepherd Penn Partners Rehabilitation Branch of the University of Pennsylvania Health System.

The peer relationships she built during the year she spent in the program and beyond have been both lasting and invaluable. Severance, like the majority of Drexel Hand Therapy students, continues to work the connections she made at Drexel and taps into the network when she has clinical questions or needs another opinion. She recently met with another therapist from the Drexel program at the American Society of Hand Therapists conference in San Diego. "It was great to have lunch with her and talk about ideas and how the program helped us grow. We talked about where we are in our careers and that was really wonderful," Severance said.

She also reflected on relationships she has with faculty members from the Hand Therapy Program. "Jane felt like an instructor, a

mentor, and a peer to everybody," Severance said about the program's director. "She was very approachable and so easy to work with and it made the whole program what it was. You weren't intimidated by her knowledge or her experience; you were motivated by it."

YOU'RE HIRED! DREXEL HAND THERAPY GRADUATES FROM AN EMPLOYER'S POINT OF VIEW



Terri Skirven is the Director of Therapy at the Philadelphia Hand Center, the Director of the Hand Rehabilitation Foundation, and a guest lecturer in the Drexel Certificate in Hand Therapy Program on the topics of wrist examination and the treatment of wrist injuries and conditions. There is no doubt in Skirven's mind that hand therapists who have completed the Drexel program tend to have a significant leg up in the competitive job market for certified hand therapists.

"I can speak from direct knowledge," she began, "I have hired several of the students from the program and as we are branching out at the Hand Center in many geographic areas, many of these students have been able to go to our far-flung clinics and basically head those up and develop them. They have done quite well and there's no doubt in my mind that their training here at Drexel has been instrumental in allowing them to be successful in those roles."

Skirven explained that someone who chooses to go through this program has opportunities that others would not. "As an employer with thirty therapists that work for me at the Hand Center, if I see that someone has gotten a certificate from the Drexel program it definitely makes them a more attractive candidate to me in terms of their hiring because of the quality of the education and the clinical exposure that they've had." She continued, saying that the academic work, including readings, interactive discussions and experiential learning during several residencies gives clinicians "a level of insight into conditions that they're faced with that will allow them to provide a level of care that's a cut above what they would have been able to provide otherwise."

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For more information about the Certificate in Hand and Upper Quarter Rehabilitation at Drexel's College of Nursing and Health Professions, contact PTadmissions@drexel.edu or call 215-762-8852.