Value of Students in the Acute Care Clinical Experience: Student-Driven Facilitation of an Early Mobility Program in the Intensive Care Unit

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Purpose: Increasing evidence continues to support physical therapy (PT) in all facets of Acute Care (AC); a projected rise of 98 million people aged 65 years and older by 2060, will rapidly increase the demand for skilled PT in hospitals. There are a limited number of PTs with clinical experience in the AC setting in part due to the lack of AC sites available during the clinical education portion of the curriculum. While the number of sites are limited, the relevance of the AC clinical experience is becoming increasingly important not only to the students but for the institutions as well. The purpose of this report is to explore the value of students in the AC setting by reporting how 2 students initiated the implementation of an Early Mobility Program (EMP) in an intensive care unit (ICU).

Description: University of Miami DPT Program requires that students perform at least 1 of 4 internships within an AC or Inpatient (IP) setting; while at each site students are required to deliver an in-service presentation. Two 3rd-year PT students performed their 2nd clinical rotation in AC at University of Miami Hospital (UMH). While each student had their own Clinical Instructor they provided a collaborative in-service on mechanical ventilation. A literature review was performed, which lead the students to a passionate interest and concern regarding the lack of an EMP in the ICUs at UMH. Communication with multiple disciplines in the ICU allowed the students to understand the different perspectives re: early mobility with intubated patients. Open dialogue between the 2 students and a critical care pulmonologist once a week for 3 weeks led to stimulating discussions. Initially, the pulmonologist was hesitant due to safety risk, but the students provided evidence demonstrating no adverse effects. During their last week, the 2 students presented an in-service to the IP staff at UMH. Their topic included an example of a well-developed EMP being implemented at another teaching hospital. Shortly after the completion of the student clinical, permission was given to the UMH staff, by the Interim Chief Medical Officer, to begin necessary steps to implement an EMP.

Summary of Use: Six months following the completion of the clinical experience, the IP PT
department supervisor was contacted in regards to the status of the EMP. The following was reported: continued interdisciplinary meetings with leaders from each department, IP PTs selected to observe the EMP at another institution, and plans to educate an entire ICU EMP team via a series of in-services on the steps to implement the EMP within UMH. The reported outcomes of the student-initiated EMP demonstrate the unanticipated value of having students in the AC setting.

**Importance to Members:** Clinical education coordinators should continue to advocate for student positions in the AC setting. This report demonstrates another way that students play an integral role in the clinical application of current evidence, and facilitates best inter-disciplinary team practice.