Highlights from the Critical Care Track

Clinical Reasoning for Physical Therapy in Critical Care

Speaker: Christiane Perme, PT CCS

In this session, the speaker discussed the concept of early mobility and physical activity, evidence-based practice, clinical reasoning skills, and challenges of physical therapy for critically ill patients.

In the introduction, several topics were addressed, including the goals of physical therapy in critical care, some of the available evidence-based practice literature, and the patients who will benefit from physical therapy in critical care. Some important points were made to help clinicians understand the early mobility in critical care does not equal physical therapy in critical care and also that mobility in critical care is everyone’s job.

Focus was placed on information to help clinicians on how do decide if they should provide physical therapy to a patient in ICU or not, what physical therapists need to know to provide safe practice in critical care, and how do you decide the best physical therapy intervention to be provided for the patient.

In addition, the following challenges for physical therapy in critical care were presented in details:

1. ICU culture which promotes sedation and bedrest
2. Severity of illness in the critically ill patient population
3. Lack of complete understanding about skeletal muscle weakness in critical illness
4. A multidisciplinary team is required to mobilize patients in ICU
5. Lack of specialized physical therapy equipment and resources
6. Unclear roles and responsibilities of physical therapy in ICU
7. Inconsistent physical therapy practice in ICU
8. Lack of specific physical therapy training in critical care

All the previous information led into the discussion of advances in clinical practice for physical therapy in critical care with focus on the area of cardiovascular surgery. Another topic covered was the use of outcome tools in this setting.

Finally, a series of “take home messages” were presented with the in order to summarize the most important points in this education session.