Implementing a Mixed-Methods Analytical Approach to Admissions in Physical Therapy Education

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What is the basis for your current admissions decisions?
What would it be ideally?
Why should we care?

• Physical therapy is a health profession rather than an occupation
  • Held to standards of competence and professionalism by society

• Changing health care system makes it difficult to uphold professional values and commitments

• Crucial that physical therapists continue to practice in alignment with Core Values of Professionalism in Physical Therapy
Key question #1

- What makes a good PT?
Key question #2

• What is the mission & vision of your program?
Key Question #3

• Is there anything wrong with this applicant?
  • BS Degree: Health science
  • Pre-requisite GPE: 371
  • Last 60 GPA: 3.55
  • Q GRE: 153
  • V GRE: 148
Core Values in Professionalism

- Accountability
- Altruism
- Compassion/Caring
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Professional Duty
- Social Responsibility
Expectations

• Newly graduated physical therapists should demonstrate these core values in daily practice
  • Responsibility of physical therapist education program & state licensing boards to assist in development
• Mixed evidence that some attributes cannot be taught in an academic environment
• It may be important to identify these qualities during the admissions process
Current Admission Practices

• Most programs rely on evaluation of cognitive abilities during the selection process (e.g., GRE, GPA)

• Fewer institutions assess non-cognitive attributes to make admissions decisions (e.g., professionalism, interpersonal skills)
  • According to PTCAS, only a little more than half (57%) of all DPT programs integrate an interview as part of their admissions criteria
Current Literature

• Solid foundation regarding the relationship between cognitive traits and graduate school academic performance
  • Effects depend on metrics used in analyses

• Little long-term data on how these students perform as clinicians upon graduation
Current Literature

• Behavioral interviews may predict success in programmatic metrics such as GPA and National Physical Therapy Examination (NPTE) exam performance

• It has been suggested that assessing non-cognitive traits through admissions interviews may better identify applicants who will be an effective member of the doctoring health profession of physical therapy


Admissions Interviews

• Behavioral interviews developed on premise that past behavior predicts future behavior

• Provides structured method of assessing various non-cognitive attributes
  • Competency categories chosen from professional standards and desired behaviors
    • Possibly derived from program mission and/or Core Values of Professionalism in Physical Therapy

• Requires substantial resources and time from applicants and personnel from program
Admission Interviews

• Important to determine the impact of the interview on the admissions decisions to ensure burden of interview is warranted
  • Is the juice worth the squeeze?
• More research is needed to evaluate the use and potential benefit of behavioral interviews in physical therapist education admissions
• Scoring rubrics
Admissions Interviews

- **Impact to applicant standing & ranking**
Interview Movers

- 14-15 Moved Down: 2 in 10-19 spots, 1 in 20-29 spots, 1 in 30-39 spots, 1 in 40-49 spots
- 14-15 Moved Up: 7 in 20-29 spots, 0 in 30-39 spots, 0 in 40-49 spots
- 15-16 Moved Down: 6 in 30-39 spots, 1 in 40-49 spots
- 15-16 Moved Up: 4 in 20-29 spots, 1 in 30-39 spots, 0 in 40-49 spots
### Case Studies

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<th>Major</th>
<th>GRE</th>
<th>Prereq GPA</th>
<th>L60 GPA</th>
<th>PT Hours</th>
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**Note.** GRE=Graduate Record Examinations, Q=quantitative, V=verbal (scores 130-170, higher score indicates better performance); prereq GPA=DPT prerequisite grade point average; L60 GPA=grade point average of last 60 credits hours taken; PT hours=number of PT observation hours.
Implications for Admissions

• Demonstrates assessing non-cognitive traits through admissions interview can alter the composition of an incoming class

• Physical therapist education programs should consider addition of structured behavioral interview to assess non-cognitive traits

• Training and faculty development will be needed to ensure proper implementation of structured behavioral interview
Discussion and Conclusion

• Stronger support is needed to validate non-cognitive traits as predictor of academic success and NPTE performance

• Further research is needed to determine the relationship between behavioral interviews and clinical performance

• Potential development for pre-interview screening of non-cognitive traits via survey or questionnaire at time of application
Thank you!

Questions?

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