Abstract

Title. The Acquisition of Critical Thinking Skills in Physical Therapy Students: A Preliminary Study

Background. Physical therapist practice has increasingly developed into autonomous practice increasing the need for students to demonstrate high levels of critical thinking ability. Despite this need for current practice, measuring the level of critical thinking ability and evaluating changes during academic and clinical experiences have not been adequately reported in the literature. Purpose. The purpose of this study is to determine critical thinking skills in physical therapy students at the time of matriculation and to determine whether these skills improve as the students progress through the curriculum. Methods. Data will be collected using the California Critical Thinking Skills Test from July 2011 through August 2012. Information will be gathered upon student matriculation and again after one year of academic and clinical work. Various factors such as cultural background, learning style, and demographic data will be analyzed for their impact on critical thinking ability. Statistical analysis will include description statistics and parametric analysis. Unique aspects of this proposed study include a sample of physical therapy doctoral students, cultural diversity sample of internationally trained physical therapists, and the measurement of acquisition of critical thinking skills over time. Relevance. The results of this study will serve as a foundation for additional research focusing on best teaching practice along with providing a framework to initiate inter-professional research collaboration here at the Institute along with potential collaboration with other institutes of higher learning.