



Common Myths In Clinical Teaching

Physical Therapist Assistant Program, Mercer County Community College, July 2018

MYTH #1

ALL EXPERIENCED CLINICIANS ARE GOOD TEACHERS.

“However appealing this notion is, the reality is that the correlation between clinical expertise and educational expertise is not good. These are two different skill sets, and they are not correlated. It is not that experienced clinicians cannot be good teachers, but more that inexperienced clinicians can also be very good teachers, and that clinicians at all levels can be poor teachers.”¹

MYTH #2

ALL I HAVE TO DEMONSTRATE IS SOUND CLINICAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS.

“While Clinical Instructors help students learn clinical knowledge and skills, it is no longer sufficient to just have technical expertise in individual patient care. Society expects Physical Therapists and Physical Therapist Assistants to be honest, reliable, diligent, accountable and able to remain current in their knowledge and skills. Clinical Instructors should be seen to be well balanced in their personal and professional lives, to have both the desire and the ability to maintain currency and practice evidence-based medicine, and to understand both the whole patient and the patient’s environment. This perhaps presents an almost superhuman position description, and academic programs will settle for much less, so long as Clinical Instructors are aware of their limits and seek advice on their teaching role, just as they would in their clinical role.”¹

MYTH #3

STUDENTS ARE ALL BRIGHT SO IT DOES NOT MATTER WHAT I DO AS A TEACHER.

“Physical Therapist Assistant students tend to be high academic achievers who develop interests and have the ability to learn a combination of what they need to learn and what they want to learn. Most Clinical Instructors have also successfully navigated this process and have done well. Clinical Instructors may remember the variable educational experiences that they and their peers had, and may assume that their contribution to their current student may not make much difference to his/her outcome.”¹

“The truth is closer to the opposite of this myth. Students will learn and perform on their own if they have to, as most students will do what it takes to pass a clinical affiliation. However, they will achieve more efficiently and appropriately if they receive effective clinical instruction, guidance and feedback.”¹

MYTH #4

THIS WORKED FOR ME SO IT WILL WORK FOR THEM.

“Many Clinical Instructors base their teaching style on their own student experiences of clinical teachers. These can be strong influences, even where the experience is not remembered as positive. Sound Clinical Instructors try to make learning a positive experience. Negative learning experiences can profoundly affect what and how students learn and successful learning should not be left to change.”¹

MYTH #5

THERE ARE FEW REWARDS FOR CLINICIANS WHO DEVOTE TIME TO TEACHING.

Extrinsic rewards for clinical teaching are often not obvious. The New Jersey State Board of Physical Therapy Examiners allows for clinicians to earn continuing education credits for clinical instruction. Additionally, Mercer County Community College allows clinical faculty to enroll without tuition in credit courses conducted by the college, upon the recommendation of the Dean and approval of the Vice President of Academic Affairs. On a space-available basis and subject to the approval of the Dean and Corporate/Community Program, clinical faculty may enroll in noncredit courses, although these opportunities are more limited. Please contact Holly Kaiser, Academic Coordinator of Clinical Education for more information regarding the criteria used to determine whether the college will support tuition-free enrollment in MCCC courses. Clinical Instructors in the spring and summer semesters receive professional development through the presentation of an in-service by students. All faculty are invited to participate in commencement ceremonies conducted in May of each year. Clinical faculty may contact the college's bookstore in early spring to reserve academic attire at college expense.

Clinical Instructors also enjoy full library privileges at both the West Windsor and James Kearney Campus libraries. This includes reference assistance, loan privileges, interlibrary loans, and access to the on-line indexes and databases. Information about library services may be obtained by visiting either library or by calling 609-570-3554. Lastly, Clinical Instructors may use the college's fitness center and pool, located on the West Windsor campus. Contact the fitness center at 609-570-3738 for hours of operation and arrangements for access.

“Intrinsic rewards remain the most available and important in most clinical settings. Luckily, they are abundant and free. Most student contact is positive, as students generally want to learn and clinicians generally want to teach. This is the main source of satisfaction for Clinical Instructors. Student interactions can be enjoyable, they provoke clinicians to keep up to date, and clinical teachers enjoy seeing ‘their’ students go on to do interesting things, even if not in their own specialty. Most clinicians are happy to offer their services without a lot of thought about genuine rewards. Clinicians who do not enjoy teaching probably should not do it, as lack of intrinsic rewards may not provide adequate compensation for the effort.”¹

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Reference:

1. Hays, R. (2006). Teaching and Learning in Clinical Settings. Seattle: Radcliffe Publishing.



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