College of Health and Pharmacy

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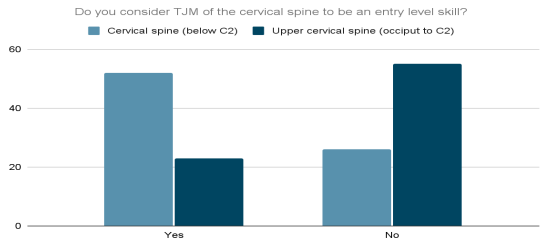
A SURVEY STUDY EXPLORING THRUST JOINT MANIPULATION CURRICULUMS WITHIN ENTRY-LEVEL DOCTOR OF PHYSICAL THERAPY PROGRAMS

Dr. Chad Howland, PT, DSc, DPT, SMT, CMPT

Background and Purpose:
The Commission of Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education (CAPTE) requires entry-level Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT) programs to produce students competent in delivering physical therapy interventions, which include thrust joint manipulation (TJM). However, no mandate exists concerning TJM curricular design or what constitutes entry-level competency. This study sought to explore the current state of TJM education and provide an update on curriculum characteristics and standards.

Methods and Results:
An online-based survey was distributed to accredited entry-level DPT programs between September 2022 to August 2023. Eligible respondents were physical therapist educators serving as the primary instructor in musculoskeletal coursework for the spine or pelvis. The survey collected data on program demographics, instructor demographics, TJM curriculum design, and perceived competency of students specific to TJM of the spine or pelvis. Survey respondents' data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (n = 78).

Survey results showed the highest percentage (78.***%)*** of respondents were board-certified orthopedic specialists (OCS), with less than one-half reporting advanced certifications in spinal manipulative therapy (47.4%). Nearly all respondents (94.8%) viewed TJM as an entry-level skill and considered their students satisfactory or above satisfactory by graduation. Most respondents view TJM of the upper cervical spine as a post entry-level skill (Figure). A disparity between spinal regions taught in TJM curricula was observed, with lumbar TJM representing the highest percentage of responses (98.7%).



Conclusion:
Compared to a decade ago, a higher percentage of physical therapist educators teaching TJM reported advanced certifications in orthopedics or manual therapy. However, both program and TJM curriculum characteristics appear comparable to previous reports. The results from this study may not be generalizable to all entry-level DPT programs given the low response rate.