

A.T. Still University

Acute Care Curriculum Content and Objectives

Our students participate in courses dedicated to physical therapy evaluation and treatment of patients with complex medical conditions and in the acute care setting during the second year of their didactic curriculum. The courses encompass the ICF model and clinical reasoning throughout. They additionally correspond to both the APTA Acute Care Section and the Academy of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Physical Therapy Entry Level Competency documents.

Acute Care:

This course includes an in-depth study of the role of the physical therapist in the acute care setting. Emphasis is on patient care management and clinical decision-making, establishing appropriate plan of care, goal setting, and treatment design, interdisciplinary communication and collaboration, PT role in the emergency department and ICU, and discharge planning. Whole person health care is applied to complex patient situations though regular considerations pertaining to social and structural determinants of health.

Students participate in multiple simulation experiences with standardized patients requiring them to review charts of various medical and surgical diagnoses and provide high-fidelity opportunities to practice line management, transfers, use of assistive devices, functional mobility and gait. Students apply professional communication with peers and simulated healthcare providers about patient status, progress, and discharge planning techniques common in the acute care setting (Huddle, Brief, Debrief, and ISBAR). Students are exposed to a majority of the lines, tubes, and machines utilized for patients in ICU and floor status.

Course objectives generally include student proficiency in analyzing and evaluating medical records/reviewing charts to determine appropriateness of a patient for physical therapy evaluation and treatment through knowledge and understanding of lab values, VTE algorithms, and ventilator safety. They additionally prepare students for application of the appropriate communication style with patients, family members, and other health care providers to eliminate barriers to and advocate for patient participation in therapy, equipment needs and discharge planning. During this course, students complete a team-based in-service assignment related to physical therapy in the acute care setting.

Additional objectives for the course expect students to:

1. Complete ongoing assessment of the patient and demonstrate ability to adjust interventions according to patient response.
2. Apply evidence-based practice to predict the patient's expected prognosis to accurately establish goals, appropriate discharge plan and further rehab needs.

3. Prioritize and develop interventions focusing on functional mobility in preparation for discharge.
4. Evaluate the need to don/doff appropriate personal protective equipment to minimize risk of infection and ensure safety.
5. Analyze the patient and environment in order to identify barriers to safety prior to initiating interventional strategies while demonstrating ability to safely manage the patient's lines and tubes, requesting assistance when needed.
6. Assess appropriate components of a patient's plan of care that can may and may not be delegated to assistive personnel.

Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation supports students in the acute care setting as they learn to differentiate between normal and abnormal response(s) to exercise and activity when applying physical therapy interventions to patients/clients with acute and chronic medical conditions and diagnoses, including but not limited to hypertension, CAD, HF, arrhythmias, PAD, COPD, IPF, and CF. Students explore diagnostic measures, surgeries and procedures, evaluation, interventions, prognosis, outcomes measures, and physical therapy plan of care development related to these conditions and pre/post rehabilitation for related procedures.

Educational methods include individualized review of previously related course content, lecture, small team assignments and case studies, lab emersion, practical skills check, written exams, and a clinical reasoning practical exam.

1. A variety of outcome measures are covered for impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions including but not limited to those that assess:
 - Airway clearance
 - Assistive and adaptive devices
 - Circulation
 - Endurance
 - Environmental, home and work barriers
 - Self-care and home management
2. Case scenarios are used frequently for students to:
 - Interpret evaluation findings based on the ICF disablement model.
 - Identify personal and environmental factors that may affect outcome.
 - Discuss diagnosis, etiology, pathophysiology, and prognosis.
 - Design a physical therapy plan of care that is safe, effective, patient/client centered and based on patient goals and outcomes.