The Effect of Student Physical Therapist's Confidence on Clinical Performance in the Field of Acute Care

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Purpose

The environment of acute care comes with a high level of patient complexity, as well as a fast-paced expectation. Because of these two factors, it is imperative that the students who enter inpatient clinical settings be confident in practice skills needed to succeed.

The purpose of this study was to determine whether physical therapy students' self-confidence in their acute care skills translates to their performance while on an inpatient clinical.

Hypotheses

We hypothesized that if students who score higher on the ACCS also score higher on self- and instructor-rated CPI forms, self-confidence may be a predictor of clinical performance.

Description of Study

Data was collected on 22 second-year doctor of physical therapy students who were undergoing their acute care clinical in the summer of 2024. The ACCS was administered at the midpoint and endpoint of the students' fall semester, to measure their confidence in their own acute-care specific abilities as they gained exposure to their didactic work.

The following summer semester, CPI scores were reported twice during the students' 10 week clinical, at the midpoint and endpoint of their clinical placement; this included both self-ratings and clinical instructor-ratings of each student at both points.

These two data sets were then statistically analyzed- both individually and combined- for any significant change or correlation.

Outcomes

The Acute Care Confidence Survey
15 questions, 4 subscales. Sample question pictured below:

The Clinical Performance Instrument
12 performance criteria rated on a 5-point scale:

Results

Unfortunately, no significant correlations were found between the ACCS and CPI score sets. However, there were still some interesting results found.

Students' **self-confidence improved significantly** between their midterm and final ACCS scores.

At clinical midterm, clinical instructors scored the students **significantly higher** than the students scored themselves.

At clinical final, clinical instructors once again scored students higher than the students scored themselves, but the difference was **even larger.**

Paired T Test Results			
	Midterm $\bar{x}$ (SD)	Final $\bar{x}$ (SD)	p
Clinical Instructor Scores			
CPI	34.95 (8.82)	51.25 (7.72)	<.001
Student Scores			
ACS	980.45 (152.64)	1179.32 (161 .01)	<.001
CPI	33.00 (7.70)	45.90 (7.81)	<.001

Conclusions

Looking at the relationship between CPI self-ratings and CI-ratings, it appears that students in general have a decreased awareness/confidence in their own capabilities

Given significant increase in students' confidence over the didactic semester, one can conclude that the more time students spend in hands-on, clinically relevant learning, the more confident they will be in the skills practiced.

Clinical Relevance

From the significant findings of this study, the formulation of a didactics confidence guide may be considered, as a form of task-specific self-reflection.

This may increase students' self-awareness of their own abilities and skills, allowing them to be more confident during their clinical placements, and beyond.

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