

Evidence-Based Diagnosis and Screening in Physical Therapist Practice

Course Description:

This course covers advanced concepts of probability-based differential diagnosis as related to physical therapist practice. The course content describes how to determine the current evidence for diagnosis regardless of the area of practice specialty. Students will self study and receive classroom instruction on using indices of diagnostic tests such as sensitivity, specificity, likelihood ratios and predictive values. Participants will learn to critically review diagnostic literature against evidence-based practice criteria for the validity of diagnostic test studies in order to facilitate appropriate selection of clinical diagnostic tests. A model is presented to combine the hypothetico-deductive reasoning process with the patient/client interview, examination, prognosis, and intervention to facilitate diagnosis and medical screening. Pathology of the major body systems and regions will be covered with current evidence-based practice diagnostic standards as they are available in the professional literature. Competencies gained through the course will help the physical therapist function as a direct access provider capable of making highly accurate diagnostic and screening decisions according to the best available evidence.

Upon completion of this course, you will be able to:

- Examine patients using an advanced hypothetico-deductive reasoning model to facilitate diagnosis.
- Develop consistent clinical processes to assist in screening for systemic disease and other non-musculoskeletal problems through the use of practice and population tailored health screening forms, competency standard physical examinations, and evidence-based screening strategies.
- Appropriately determine the patient/client who requires medical care not within the scope of physical therapist practice.
- Review diagnostic and screening studies according to evidence-based criteria for validity.
- Select the most appropriate diagnostic tests according to the principles of evidence-based diagnosis.
- Recognize the signs, symptoms, and rehabilitation implications of a broad spectrum of non-musculoskeletal disorders.
- Integrate examination of the abdomen, lymphatic system, and peripheral vascular system into patient/client examination.
- Competently and safely function as a direct access practitioner.
- Serve as a mentor for peers on diagnosis and medical screening according to the principles of evidence-based practice.



- Engage in the diagnostic process to establish differential diagnosis across systems and across the lifespan.

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