A Novel Approach to the Orthopedic Lab Practical: A One-on-One Client-Based Experience

In order to prepare physical therapy students for a high level of function, we need to develop active learners and critical thinkers who are able to function professionally and deliver effective, quality care to an increasingly diverse patient/client population.

In A Normative Model of Physical Therapist Professional Education, the vision of physical therapist professional education includes dynamic learning experiences.

**In Class Clinical Application Promotes Student Success**

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- Future healthcare professions will be continually faced with unique and ambiguous client problems in the clinical setting during which they are forced to stop, think, and problem solve.

- **Problem:** Students were lacking an experience working directly with clients within the Orthopedic Physical Therapy Curriculum

- **Solution:** A Client-based end-of-semester lab practical with individuals with true musculoskeletal impairments in PHTH 517 Fall Semester and PHTH 518 Spring Semester
  - 32 community-based clients with orthopedic dysfunctions participated
  - 60 minute session: 20 minute evaluation, 25 minute treatment, 15 minute home program instruction

- **Outcomes:** Critical Thinking, Integration of Course Material, and Professional Values were evident via student feedback
  - Client feedback praised the student’s professionalism, manual techniques, and active listening skills.
  - 97% of clients rated their experience as “highly positive”

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| Critical Thinking      | “I need to look at the whole client, not just small pieces, and that really made me stop and think about the whole process.”  
                       | “I realized I need to be open-minded and adaptable to change when working with a patient – each patient has their own story and needs our attention.”  
                       | “This type of setting really allowed me to test myself in a more relaxed setting without feeling judged on every decision.” |
| Integration            | “This practical allowed me to put all the pieces together from the semester, and it made it much clearer.”  
                       | “This helped prepare me for my clinical rotation by treating a patient with true orthopedic problems, versus a classmate.” |
| Professional Values    | “I learned so much about myself and the importance of my verbal and nonverbal postures.”  
                       | “I learned I can really help someone relieve their pain and have a positive impact on the community.” |