Musculoskeletal Manual Therapy Certification Program Overview

Nova Southeastern University

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Program in Musculoskeletal Manual Therapy

Mission

The Mission of the Program in Musculoskeletal Manual Therapy at Nova Southeastern University is to train physical therapy experts in the evaluation, diagnosis, prognosis, and management of neuromuscular movement-related disorders. The goal of the Program is to enable physical therapists to gain Certification in Musculoskeletal Manual Therapy upon completion of the course offerings. Upon completion of the Program, graduates will be prepared to integrate the science and art of musculoskeletal manual therapy to the orthopedic physical therapy practice. The Program promotes clinical reasoning and scientific inquiry, combining expert practice with evidence and encourages research and case presentation in orthopedics to create and share new knowledge and skills. Graduates will demonstrate expert patient management and clinical consultation, making a lasting contribution to their local and professional community.

Philosophy

Musculoskeletal manual therapy is any “hands-on” treatment provided by the physical therapist for neuromusculoskeletal disorders. It may include joint mobilization and manipulation, myofascial release, muscle stretching, passive movements of the affected body part, or therapeutically guided active movements against therapist’s resistance to improve muscle activation and timing. Musculoskeletal manual therapy is indicated when a patient has muscle, joint, or soft tissue dysfunction that affect movement, strength, posture, or cause pain.

Many patients with neuromuscular disorders may regain full body function with an exercise and/or a movement re-education program without a hands-on approach. However, the presence of joint and soft tissue restrictions adversely affect exercise and movement based therapies potentially causing undue pain and aggravation of the neuromuscular disorder. For patients with musculoskeletal restrictions, the certified manual therapist can offer a hands-on approach to improve joint mobility, muscle flexibility, and reduce pain, in order to allow the implementation of an effective exercise and movement re-education program, restoring body function and improving health.

The philosophical principles of the manual therapy courses at Nova Southeastern University are eclectic and evolved from renowned manual therapists. The patient evaluation principles incorporate G. Maitland (patient interview), J. Cyriax (referred pain, capsular patterns, end-feel, resisted isometric muscle testing, neurological exam), and D. Magee (special tests). The patient management and intervention principles evolved largely from F. Kaltenborn (arthrokinematics), G. Maitland (irritability, movement oscillation), D. Butler (neurodynamics), R. McKenzie (centralization phenomenon), and S. Paris (pain & dysfunction management). The manual therapy curriculum is based on the Standard Educational Document from the International Federation of Orthopedic Manipulative Physical Therapy (IFOMPT, www.ifompt.com) and the Description of Advanced Specialty Practice of the American Academy of Orthopedic Manual Physical
Therapy (AAOMPT, www.aaompt.org). All faculty members are Fellows of the AAOMPT.

The faculty believes that patient management is based on an evidence-based practice hierarchy. Clinical decision should initially be based on systematic reviews and randomized clinical trials; however, when a patient clinical presentation falls outside these high-level research publications, the faculty asserts that the patient should be managed based on the remaining evidence available along the research hierarchy ladder, including quasi-experimental investigations, descriptive studies, and even expert opinion, respectively.

Musculoskeletal Manual Therapy Certification Program Goals

The Certified Musculoskeletal Manual Therapist will demonstrate:

1) Advanced skills in all practice dimensions and knowledge areas described in the latest Description of Advanced Specialty Practice (DASP) in orthopedic physical therapy and orthopedic manual physical therapy

2) Proficiency in performing safe and effective examination and “hands-on” interventions for neuromusculoskeletal disorders taking into consideration indications and contra-indications for orthopedic manual physical therapy.

3) Expertise to interpret clinical data to prioritize a plan of care in direct and non-direct access situations.

4) Ability to make clinical decisions based on evidence based practice and critical inquire

The Musculoskeletal Manual Therapy Certification Program will:

1) Provide an environment for NSU alumni and local/regional physical therapists to complete the certification while working and attending weekend and on-line courses

2) Address all areas of the practice dimensions and the foundational knowledge of the DASP of Orthopedic Section of the APTA and the AAOMPT through didactic education and hands on instruction of psychomotor skills

3) Advocate research and case report presentations to create new knowledge and skills in orthopedic physical therapy and musculoskeletal manual therapy

4) Foster an environment that promotes advanced clinical reasoning based on evidence based practice and critical inquiry

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