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OTA 1020-001
Assignment: Job Shadow #2

Introduction

I visited TOSH in the Hand Therapy section. When I finished my shots and inoculations prior to getting this shadow I had no idea that I was going to work with hand specialists. It was fun getting to see a specialized area of practice. I was there for about four hours and I know I barely scrapped the surface. While every patient had a hand issue, his or her treatment was different. Granted, their treatment overlapped in many ways, but it was great to see so many options for one part of the body.

Name of Facility and Description

The building overall is very big and can feel like a maze. It took me a few minutes to find HR, and then find the therapy room. It was very big, like a warehouse, but much more personable. Both PT's and OT's work in the same large room. On the day I shadowed there were 4 OT's and one COTA. After showing up I was told to simply wander around and view whatever I like. "We leave that up to you", I was told. I had conflicting feelings that I want to get involved and show that I'm interested, but I also didn't want to invade the client's or therapist's space and privacy. Most of the therapists were very welcoming and made it comfortable to introduce myself and ask if they minded if I observed. All the clients were very friendly.

Practice Area and Practice Setting

This particular practice area is hand therapy, meaning they deal specifically with problems of the hand, fingers, and wrist. They are also more in tune with issues of the arm, skin, bone, and muscle tissue of the arm, elbow, and hand. The age of clients was very vast. The youngest patient was about 10 and I also saw patients in their late adulthood.

Description of Client Diagnosis

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The majority of people I shadowed were involved in some sort of trauma. One woman had a finger torn off by an electric pallet jack. A few folks had cut themselves with knives while doing... whatever. One man was in a car accident and thrown 80 feet. He spent 12 weeks in a cast and has been in therapy since November. He is just now starting to bend his fingers and elbow, which is excruciating. He's in therapy three days a week for three hours at a time. Many of the same tools were used, but not all. I enjoyed getting to see how the splints get made.

Summary Description of Interventions Observed

The therapists were patient and friendly. I like the personalization that the clients received. Some of them had been in therapy for years and you could see that they had developed strong relationships with the therapists. It helped to really demonstrate how important it is to treat people as a whole and not a "patient" or a means to an end. All of the tools and equipment they used were interesting. They had everything from simple weights and dumbbells and putty, to machines like an ultra sound and the fluido dry warm-up machine. Some of the exercises that seemed the most simple proved to be very difficult. One was picking up glass beads with the thumb and index finger, rolling them into your palm without turning your wrist and holding as many as you can before placing them in a bucket. It was interesting to see how very simple tasks such as crumpling magazine paper could be used as a tool for therapy. They worked with range of motion, flexibility, massage, pressure, etc.

Conclusion

I enjoyed shadowing this specialized practice area. It helped to see how creative they were with finding uncountable methods for working the same body part as well as the need to find new ways to coach clients. They molded treatment to the needs of the client.