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Com 1430

Interviewee: Christine Gaul

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The interview was conducted over a Zoom call and started with the usual introductions. I introduced myself, and Ms. Gaul introduced herself and informed me of her current employment as a physical therapist in an elementary school as well as being a certified scoliosis physical therapist, and she was born in New Jersey which is where she currently still is. This was interesting to me because I didn't expect elementary schools to have physical therapists. Still, she later explained why it is beneficial so I will share that in my interview summary while providing my insight, analysis, and takeaways from the conversation we had. In this paper, I will break down the interview into 3 parts, before her academic career, her academic career, and the present day, and finally end it off with what I've taken away from this experience.

Firstly, I asked Ms. Gaul if this profession was what she wanted to pursue when she was younger, and she then stated that she wanted to be a nurse when she was younger but knew that it wasn't for her as she saw her aunt and grandmother be nurses themselves, and by 8th grade, she decided she wanted to be a physical therapist. I assumed this was the case because most people start off wanting to be something else, but due to experiences, they have put them on a different path. Then, I asked her why she wanted to specialize in physical therapy over other forms of healthcare, and she said that she was a gymnast for around 10 years, and during this time she would often get injured, so she was exposed to physical therapy at a young age and inspired by what they do and enjoyed the way that therapist impacted their patient's lives. This caught my interest and sparked a conversation, because many people involved in sports deal with many

injuries, and they are exposed to many different healthcare professionals who specialize in different fields.

The conversation then shifted to her educational experiences, before she became a physical therapist. Her motivation for pursuing this career was its impact on a patient's quality of life, and how the outcome changed the lives of many people, which is what led her to pursue the profession and be a part of changing lives and supporting them. Everyone experiences self-doubt at one point in their academic career including me, which is why Ms. Gaul if she had experienced any self-doubt during her academic career, and how she overcame it. She stated that she has, "always been a self-doubter. I gave myself breaks, looked to physical therapists who had graduated from physical therapy school for guidance, and reminded myself that I was capable and had made it so far already." This response made me think a little about how I was when I got transferred out of dental hygiene, and my previous thought process in my second year of college, so what she said about making it so far already was good to hear.

Lastly, the conversation shifted to the present day, and we started to talk about her current thoughts about the physical therapy field, what she learned, and more specific questions in that regard. I was curious as to what are the most common problems that she encountered with her patients. She responded by stating, "I work with a lot of students and I build strength, motor planning, and balance. A lot must relearn movement patterns and functional activities such as climbing stairs. The scoliosis patients I work with require different levels of personality and approaches to giving them the information that they need in a way they can absorb and process. The wording is imperative when talking with scoliosis patients and giving them the bigger picture through patient-friendly wording, for example not using so much medical jargon as a lot have anxiety. I have a lot of kids with behavioral difficulties so talking and helping them work

through that is a lot of adapting tone, pitch, length of sentences, etc.” While listening to her speaking I was making some connections on where she utilized her gymnastic background, along with her scoliosis training. She informed me that learning about her profession has helped her understand the human body and how important movement and exercise are while having a better understanding and idea of how the different body systems work which has made her more in tune with herself. Also, I asked if there are any skills or techniques that have been acquired over the years (health-related or not). Ms. Gaul told me that she has become more compassionate towards people while becoming a better active listener. She communicates with the students in different ways, because some like songs, some need a louder and more energetic approach to keep their attention, and a lot of her students use AAC devices (iPad) to communicate as most are nonverbal which prompted her to learn American sign language to communicate with the students as many of them sign to communicate their needs. At the end of the interview, I asked Cristine about the innovation of technology like better prosthetics, and how she thinks the physical therapy field will change with implants. She stated, “There is a whole new development in technology especially with stroke/ spinal cord patients/neurophysical therapy. The goals and quality of life the patients can achieve have improved drastically. Robotic suits and limbs are allowing patients with higher-level spinal cord injuries to walk and become more independent. I don’t think it would become too complex as people are adapting to changes in technology.” This was extremely interesting to me because I like Sci-fi shows, and find cybernetics very cool, but it was interesting to hear how the implants work to transfer your brain communication to your body parts (Ex: Fingers), which is something straight out of a video game (especially the spinal cord implant which I have seen before). The last thing she said to me was that she would like to see the physical therapy field become more patient-oriented, insurance companies not having as

much control over the number of sessions, equipment, or testing the patient needs, and more on-one patient care especially in the outpatient physical therapy setting.

This interview was interesting, and I had fun learning about the physical therapy field. I enjoyed hearing about Christine's experiences, because maybe I might encounter an issue in the future, and I can look back on this assignment to figure out solutions to my problems. For example, I have been doubting how I would communicate in a healthcare setting every time we have one of those class assignments because I don't like showing alot of emotion, and how everyone says they would rather have a very loving and caring healthcare provider, but I dont express myself that way, so I get the mixed feeling during these class participation events and keep to my self.