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05-02-08  
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### **Internship at Towson Sports Medicine**

From the very first day I walked into Towson Sports Medicine (TSM), I felt welcomed by staff and patients alike. The staff provides the optimal support for a learning intern. The entire TSM team consists of nine full-time physical therapists (PTs), approximately two on-call physical therapists, one occupational therapist, five athletic trainers, two physical therapist assistants, three physical therapy technicians (PT Tech) and four individuals managing billing and reception. I was placed under the supervision of Ms. Christina (Chris) Lewis, who has been a Physical Therapist for approximately fifteen years. For the first month or so, I carefully observed and soaked in the depth of information and explanations contained in her evaluations of patients. The patients under her care were recovering from a wide range of ailments such as torn ACL's, hip replacements, reconstructive surgeries and even some rehabbing patients with unknown diagnoses. Shortly after beginning my internship at TSM, I was hired as a PT Technician. This was a wonderful opportunity because it broadened my scope of interaction within the practice. I am now able to assist more directly in patient care and feel like a contributing member of the team to the core functionality of the facility.

I worked at two physical therapy settings prior to TSM and while there are some basic similarities (such as providing basic physical therapy to similar type patients), they differ in many ways. The most potent characteristic that TSM has over the previous settings is their passion for what they do. The team dynamics at TSM are fine tuned

creating a coordinated effort that provides patients a complete package of professional care. The two previous settings had the feeling of “just getting by.” Although those experiences did challenge me in some capacity, it is TSM that has really challenged me cognitively. It would be fair to note that I now hold a position with more responsibilities at TSM as opposed to my prior experiences. I have also grown in my experience and knowledge lending me to contribute to a greater degree. Thus, my experience at TSM may provide greater opportunity because I am better positioned to engage as an active member of the team. Furthermore, I believe that the two prior experiences assisted in preparing me for my experience at TSM. Yet in contrast, they also provide a frame of reference from which I learned that not all facilities provide the same level of service. Working with a dynamic group of professionals at TSM has helped me to see how truly effective physical therapy can be in changing a patient’s life.

Upon beginning this internship, with TSM, I developed some foundational goals and objectives to include; 1) to increase my knowledge and understanding of the physical therapists role in the health care profession; 2) to gain more insight into the various injuries, surgeries and disabilities seen in a PT setting; and 3) most importantly to really evaluate myself as a potential student of PT and to confirm that this profession is something I feel I can do and believe I will be successful at.

Through my experience at TSM, I can confidently and proudly say that each one of my goals and objectives has already significantly been met. I have witnessed the various relationships within the health care profession that enable TSM to function to include those between physicians, insurance companies, physical therapy assistants, athletic trainers, occupational therapists, PT techs and even the supporting functions in

the billing departments and receptionists area. I have realized that effective communication is critical among all of these roles. I have gained deeper insight into what goes into evaluating patients, constructing an exercise regime for each and learning the underlying causes and symptoms of many injuries and surgeries. I have come to admire the professionalism I have observed at TSM. It is very apparent that the PTs at TSM keep up on their education within and even outside the PT realm. Their willingness to share this knowledge and experience has contributed to helping me obtain my objectives. They are consistently attentive to teaching me by actively demonstrating what they're doing and explaining in detail to a degree that's educational yet understandable for someone at my level. I've also seen the importance of being able to communicate on multiple levels. For example, professional PTs must be able to explain things in lay-mans terms for patients and yet have very specific technical discussions with their colleagues and other health care professionals. My most significant goal/objective was to confirm my career choice and what I got was not only confirmation but increased motivation. This was in great extent a result of attaining the first two goals and objectives. The first two built a foundational experience that increased my knowledge, exposed me to various aspects of the profession, gave me hands on experience, allowed me the opportunity to learn from true professionals and ultimately realize that not only is this what I want to do, but gave me the confidence to know that I can succeed as a PT. Although I was and still am slightly intimidated by the role of a PT and the responsibility that is carried with it, I have established a very strong desire and motivation to continue pursuing the field of physical therapy.

My confirmation is a direct result of the wonderful experience I have had at TSM.

There were many factors that contributed to my experience at TSM other than the transfer of knowledge. TSM maintains a healthy professional environment where staff and patients feel comfortable and respected (calm/non-offensive demeanor, humor, intelligence, optimism etc.). Another aspect of the experience was witnessing their passion for what they do. This only opened my eyes further to what physical therapy can do and how I can contribute by being a part of it. One experience in particular sticks out as a young male hockey player struggled with therapy, but was finally able to successfully do an exercise (that resembles the motions of an ice skater) that he was unable to do with proficiency before. I remember his reaction as he stood there with a huge grin on his face and told Chris, "That felt great." She turned to me and said, "And that's why we do this job, for instances like that." After interning/working at TSM for over four months now I have witnessed and experienced for myself on numerous occasions how rewarding this field can be.

As I look back at the experience I have gained at TSM, there are many positives and my mentor, Chris, has been nothing but reassuring. In fact, during my recent review, Chris was so pleased with my progress and contribution that she could not provide any constructive criticism. This only added to the belief that I can truly be successful as a professional certified physical therapist. Overall, my experience at TSM has been phenomenal and one that I will never forget. I have never enjoyed working at a facility as much as I have at TSM. It is by their continual encouragement, respect and professionalism that my love for this field continues to increase and I am sure that this experience will truly carry through the rest of my life as a Doctor of Physical Therapy.