

# Identifying Educational Needs of Interdisciplinary Allied Health Professionals for Parkinson's Disease Care

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## PURPOSES

- 1) To identify the learning needs of allied health professionals (physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech/ language pathologists) as related to the treatment of patients with Parkinson's disease (PD).
- 2) To assess their perceived quality of professional training/clinical experience in PD care.
- 3) To use this information to plan PD educational programs for allied health professionals.

## METHODS

We analyzed responses from 24 surveys received from allied health professionals who planned to attend or expressed interest in attending a PD educational program. The 21-item survey (including 6 demographic items) was developed by the Associate Directors of Education for the Houston VA Parkinson's Disease Research, Education and Clinical Center (PADRECC), and was reviewed by our Allied Health Advisory Committee. A mean score was calculated for the Likert-type items. From these results, a two-day didactic and experiential PD continuing education program was designed for allied health professionals.

## RESULTS (n=24)

Professional Identity, n (%)

Physical Therapists (PT) =9 (38)

Occupational Therapists (OT) = 7 (29)

Speech/Language Pathologists (SLP)= 8 (33)

Length of practice, yrs. (Mean 14.87 yrs. Range 3-35 yrs.)

Physical Therapists = 16.5 yrs.

Occupational Therapists = 9.43 yrs.

Employment setting, n (%)

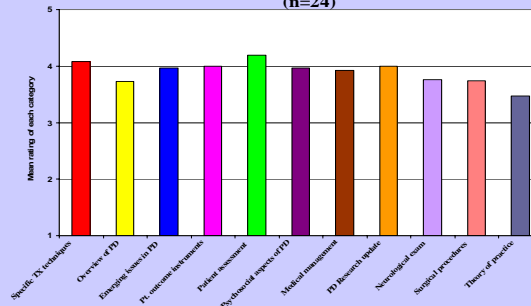
Acute Care = 14 (58)

Rehabilitation = 4 (17)

Long-Term Care = 4 (17)

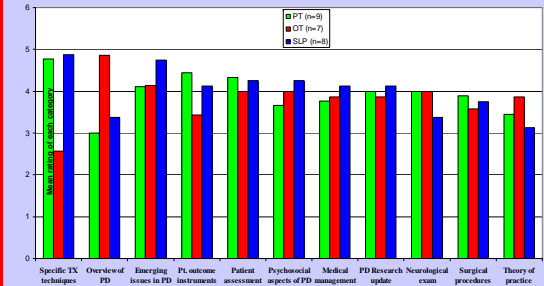
Private Practice = 2 (8)

Figure 1. Learning Needs of Allied Health Professionals (n=24)



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Figure 2. A Comparison of Learning Needs for Allied Health Professionals



## DISCUSSION

- A need exists for allied health professionals and pre and post-graduate educators to expand their knowledge of PD and related movement disorders.
- Specific PD and movement disorder content areas need to be developed for the three individual allied health disciplines (PT, OT, SLP).
- Relevant patient care will be strengthened by course work, educational seminars/internships, and clinical practice in PD and movement disorders.
- Specialized certification in PD and movement disorders needs to be explored.
- Instruments to measure PD knowledge/clinical skills need to be formulated.