

EXPLORING RESIDENCIES AND FELLOWSHIPS

EXCELLING AS A PHYSICAL THERAPIST IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Are you ready to take your career to the next level? The best strategy for pursuing post-professional education is to first develop a plan.

The goal you've been studiously working toward for the past few years is finally within reach – you're about to graduate. Now what?

Due to the current economic climate, many physical therapy graduates are considering the options for continuing their education. But how do you decide between a residency and a fellowship? Should you go now or wait until later?

Some key questions to ask yourself:

- Am I ready emotionally to make a sustained commitment to further my study?
- Will other personal responsibilities affect my ability to go later?
- How will I balance the financial challenges?
- Do I need additional coursework or work experience?

The most successful residents and fellows have a few key characteristics in common. These individuals are motivated to excel, have excellent written and verbal communication skills and are able to handle multiple priorities. They also are flexible learners and receptive to feedback.

Developing a Plan

The best strategy for pursuing post-professional education is to develop a plan first. Map out a post-professional development plan or career path that begins with your internship experiences and builds from there.

“I now have more advanced clinical reasoning and handling skills and have become more knowledgeable about current issues facing physical therapy.”

Tina Avelar
MPT, FAAOMPT

- Clinical reasoning skills
- Advanced examination & treatment abilities
- Refinement of handling skills
- Blend a theoretical foundation with clinical practice
- Tools to grow professionally
- Strategies for self-reflection & analysis
- Increased marketability
- Diversity in your role as a professional

Elements of a post-professional development plan:

- ❑ Think about what types of continuing education courses, residencies, fellowships or other certifications you’d like to complete.
- ❑ Explore residencies and fellowships that are of most interest to you (e.g. specialty area, location, length of program, and part-time or full-time).
- ❑ Choose a setting for your first employment that will provide you with broad exposure to patient types and the chance to receive feedback or discuss patient cases with more senior therapists.
- ❑ Select continuing education coursework that will contribute to the residency or fellowship admissions requirements.

Financial considerations often come into play when planning post-professional education. Some factors to consider include student loan deferment, relocation costs, and salary and benefit packages.

What are the Benefits of Post-Graduate Education?

There are a number of benefits to completing a post-professional residency or fellowship in physical therapy. Rather than learning by trial and error on your own, the ongoing mentoring you will receive will advance your examination and treatment repertoire and refine your handling skills. You’ll be able to accelerate and consolidate your clinical reasoning skills, expand theoretical knowledge and strengthen your evidence-based background. Most importantly, you’ll increase your confidence in communicating with patients and other providers.

All of these factors combine to increase your marketability to future employers by setting you apart as a motivated therapist who is committed to ongoing professional development. After gaining more experience, many graduates go on to become instructors in the community, university faculty and consultants to industry.

Patients and physical therapy facilities also benefit from your skills. Patients who receive treatment from residency and fellowship graduates express confidence in the thoroughness and efficiency of the care they receive. Employers report higher staff recruitment and retention when residency and fellowship graduates are employed in their settings.

The more physical therapists who study in residencies and fellowships, the stronger the profession becomes overall. These programs define practice areas, undertake research contributing to evidence-based practice and improve quality of care for all patients receiving physical therapy.

Residencies and Fellowships – What’s Different? What’s the Same?

Clinical residencies and fellowships are both planned programs of post-professional clinical and didactic education. Residencies and fellowships are offered by universities, private practices, hospitals and HMOs. Both clinical residencies and fellowships integrate coursework in evidence-based practice and in the applied sciences (e.g. anatomy, physiology, biomechanics, etc.) with clinical coursework in the specialty area. You’ll learn a wide range of examination and intervention techniques, but clinical mentoring from an expert clinician remains the hallmark of these programs. A residency is about developing a sound and up-to-date knowledge base in a specialty area and learning how to apply it in clinical practice. A fellowship focuses on a subspecialty area and developing additional advanced skill sets of leadership, teaching, clinical mentoring, and research.

“Residencies and fellowships skyrocket you to a new level of knowledge and self-analysis that will serve you for a lifetime.”

Jamie Evankovich
DPT, FAAOMPT

Clinical residencies are designed to significantly advance the resident’s preparation as a provider of patient care services in a defined specialty area of clinical practice. Residency programs prepare physical therapists with the knowledge and skills to pass the certification examination. There are residency programs in acute care, cardiovascular & pulmonary, clinical electrophysiology, geriatrics, neurology, oncology, orthopaedics, pediatrics, sports, women’s health, and wound management.

A fellowship is designed for residency graduates and board-certified therapists to focus on a subspecialty area of clinical practice, education or research. There are fellowship programs in critical care, hand therapy, movement system, neonatology, orthopaedic manual physical therapy, performing arts, spine, sports division 1, and upper extremity athlete. Like residency programs, fellowships include didactic coursework in the subspecialty area and in evidence-based practice, ongoing clinical mentoring, tutorials and clinical projects.

You can find a directory of credentialed programs online at <https://accreditation.abptrfe.org/#/directory>.

CURRICULUM

“Expect to work hard and learn about yourself as a clinician and as a person. It is a long but worthwhile process of discovery and rediscovery.”

Halima Ahmadu
DPT, FAAOMPT

RESIDENCY	FELLOWSHIP
1,500 hours	1,000 hours
9 – 36 months	6 – 36 months
Based on Description of Specialty Practice (DSP)	Based on Description of Advanced Specialty Practice (DASP)

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Since admission requirements vary across programs, take the time to study each program and their requirements or call the program directly.

RESIDENCY	FELLOWSHIP
Licensed in the program’s state	Licensed in the program’s state
Demonstrate basic level of competency and safety	Graduate of a residency program in a related specialty area or an American Board of Physical Therapy Specialties (ABPTS) board-certified specialist in a related area of specialty
May accept new graduates or require clinical experience	Minimum of two years of clinical experience

A Model for Post-Graduate Physical Therapy Education

An example of a program to start your research

Kaiser Permanente Northern California Graduate Physical Therapy Education is the nation’s premier training program for physical therapists ready to take their career to the next level. Joining our learning community means unparalleled mentoring, being immersed in an innovative clinical environment and working alongside the profession’s top faculty. Our program has served as a model for graduate physical therapy education for over 30 years.

We are committed to guiding you along your path to clinical excellence and transforming you into tomorrow's leaders. We deliver a level of consistency and engagement in your mentorship experience that no one else can match. Residents and fellows-in-training are matched with mentors who deliver personalized one-on-one clinical guidance throughout the program. All of our mentors go through a rigorous mentor-the-mentor training program to ensure consistency in technique, instruction, and communications.

With hundreds of alumni across the country, our graduates can be found modeling advanced clinical skills in private practices and teaching programs, mentoring developing clinicians, teaching at top programs and universities, leading research projects, running their own practices and holding leadership positions in industry associations.

"This has been a fantastic program which surpassed my expectations. It helped me bring together several prior years of PT experience, and I now have the confidence and clinical knowledge base to solve complex patient problems."

Mark Schroeder
MS, PT

ORTHOPAEDIC PHYSICAL THERAPY RESIDENCY

Attain the advanced skills, knowledge and experience to become a highly-skilled clinician in evidence-based orthopaedic physical therapy practice. Joining our learning community means unparalleled mentoring, being immersed in an innovative clinical environment and working alongside the profession's top faculty.

The hallmark of the Kaiser experience is the opportunity to be mentored by some of the most talented residency faculty in the country. We deliver a level of consistency, engagement and curriculum integration for your mentorship experience that no one else can match. Residents are paired with mentors who deliver personalized one-on-one clinical guidance throughout the program.

Program Overview:

- Runs September - August
- Innovative hybrid curricular design
- Full 40-hour work week with patient care, either as a Kaiser resident or continuing your current employment
- 150 hours of one-on-one mentoring at Kaiser Rehab Centers throughout Northern California or at your current worksite

ORTHOPAEDIC MANUAL PHYSICAL THERAPY FELLOWSHIP

We guide you on your path to professional excellence, built on a foundation of clinical expertise, service and leadership. Fellows-in-training learn efficient, advanced examination and management approaches through comprehensive

“The one-on-one mentoring process far exceeded my expectations in helping incorporate the didactic knowledge into my clinical problem solving and treatment in day-to-day practice.”

Matt Willey
PT, DPT, OCS, COMT

online coursework, individualized one-on-one mentoring, and lab sessions. Our graduates are highly respected for their clinical expertise, efficiency in practice and ability to model advanced clinical practice and leadership for developing clinicians.

Program Overview:

- Begins in September each year and runs 18 months
- Innovative hybrid curricular design with updated curriculum launching in 2019
- Learn efficient, advanced examination and management approaches through comprehensive online coursework, individualized one-on-one mentoring and in-person lab sessions
- Full 40-hour work week with patient care, either as a Kaiser employee or continuing your current employment

For more information, visit kp.org/graduatePTeducation

- Program mission and vision
- Type of institution
- Delivery model
- Program length
- Online, in-person or hybrid
- Tuition and benefits
- Faculty expertise
- Number of students
- Number of faculty
- Faculty to student ratio

How Do I Choose a Program?

So, you’ve decided you’re ready for post-professional education and you have a few programs in mind, but how do you go about selecting a program?

There is considerable variability in the structure of programs, e.g. part time versus full time, frequency of in-person class time, and when supervision occurs. It’s important to have a good understanding of the pace, flow and organization of the program. Start by doing some research online and visit a program’s website. Also arrange to visit the program and speak with the program director, faculty, residents/fellows and alumni.

Use the worksheet on page seven as a guide to help you gather as much information about a program as possible.

Additional Resources

American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)
www.apta.org

American Academy of Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapists (AAOMPT)
www.aaompt.org

Program Comparison Worksheet

	Program #1	Program #2	Program #3	Program #4
Location				
Delivery model				
Program length				
Program philosophy				
Number of residents/fellows each year				
Where and when is mentoring done?				
Contact with other residents/fellows				
Tuition & benefits				
Program's strengths				
Program's weaknesses				
What are they looking for in a candidate?				