

# EXPLORING RESIDENCIES AND FELLOWSHIPS

## EXCELLING AS A PHYSICAL THERAPIST IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> 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?

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

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.

## Why Should I Pursue a Post-Professional Residency or Fellowship?

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.

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. Therapists can complete residencies in geriatrics, neurology, orthopedics, pediatrics, sports and women’s health from a number of credentialed programs across the country.

A fellowship is designed for residency graduates or board-certified therapists to focus on a subspecialty area of clinical practice, education or research.

**Attendance at a residency is not required for admission into a fellowship.**

Current fellowships are in Division I Athletics, hand therapy, manual therapy and movement science. Like residency programs, fellowships include didactic coursework in the subspecialty area and in evidence-based practice, ongoing clinical mentoring, tutorials and clinical projects.

“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

### CURRICULUM

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 Specialty Practice (DSP) or practice analysis

“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

## 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 PT in the program’s state	Licensed PT in the program’s state
Demonstrates basic level of competency and safety	May be board-certified, post-residency or with demonstrated clinical experience. Completion of a residency is not required.
May be a new graduate, but individuals with many years of experience also attend	Minimum one to two years of experience, but individuals with many years of experience also attend

## A Model Fellowship Program

### An example of a program to start your research

Kaiser Permanente in Hayward, California, offers one of the top physical therapy fellowships in advanced orthopedic manual therapy in the country. The Kaiser Permanente Hayward Physical Therapy Fellowship in Advanced Manual Therapy serves as a national model, bringing together a challenging state-of-the-art curriculum, superior one-on-one mentoring and the country’s most experienced fellowship faculty all under one roof. As the oldest manual therapy fellowship in the country, the faculty and program director have won state and national awards for their contributions to residency and fellowship education.

The Kaiser PT Fellowship program consists of a six-month part-time Clinical Mentorship followed by a yearlong part-time Advanced Fellowship. Graduates receive a Manual Therapy Certification and are eligible to become a Fellow in American Academy of Orthopaedic Manual Physical Therapists.

This could be YOUR program if you want...

- ❑ To be mentored by the most experienced fellowship faculty in the country, leading professionals who will work with you one-on-one
- ❑ To gain knowledge and skills that would normally take years to

integrate on your own

- ❑ The opportunity to practice with peers, refining your clinical reasoning skills to solve complex patient problems
- ❑ A program with an exceptionally well-organized and well-established yet dynamic curriculum
- ❑ To learn systematic clinical reasoning skills that can be applied to a range of intervention approaches as you proceed in your career
- ❑ To study at an APTA-credentialed fellowship that is a model for manual therapy fellowship education in the United States

“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

## THE CLINICAL MENTORSHIP

The Clinical Mentorship immerses students in a stimulating orthopedic learning environment. Mentees receive online clinical coursework, tailored one-on-one clinical mentoring and comprehensive small group tutorials. The Clinical Mentorship is offered once a year, starting in October (with time off in December) and ending in May of the following year.

## THE ADVANCED FELLOWSHIP

The Clinical Mentorship is designed as a stepping stone to the Advanced Fellowship. Fellows learn advanced clinical reasoning concepts and advanced manual therapy examination and interventions. The Advanced Fellowship is offered once per year from July of one year to June of the following year. The Clinical Mentorship and Advanced Fellowship can be completed consecutively or with a break. All components must be completed within 36 months.

*For more information or to visit the program or arrange to speak with alumni, visit [www.kaiserhaywardptfellowship.com](http://www.kaiserhaywardptfellowship.com) or contact Program Director Carol Jo Tichenor at (510) 675-4259 or by e-mail at [caroljo.tichenor@kp.org](mailto:caroljo.tichenor@kp.org).*

“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

## 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?

Start by doing some research online and visit a program’s Web site. Also arrange to visit the program and speak with the program director, faculty, residents/fellows and alumni. Use the chart 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](http://www.apta.org)

American Academy of Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapists (AAOMPT)

[www.aaompt.org](http://www.aaompt.org)

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# Program Comparison Worksheet

	Program #1	Program #2	Program #3	Program #4
Location				
What is the program structure? (Online? Onsite? Full-time? Part-time?)				
Length of program				
What is the program philosophy?				
How many residents/fellows are trained each year?				
Where and when is mentoring done?				
What contact is there with other residents/fellows?				
What are the program stressors?				
What are some of the program's strengths?				
What are some of the program's weaknesses?				
What are they looking for in a candidate?				