

2013 APTA Conference and Expo in Salt Lake City, UT June 27, 2013, Thursday, 8:00am – 9:30am

<http://www.apta.org/Conference/Programming/2013/Technology/>

Embracing Technology, Enhancing Therapy

Welcome to the opening session of this year's Technology Track at Annual Conference. This opening session will set the stage for the remaining sessions in this track as well as introduce a developing concept within Physical Therapy – collaborative web-sites designed for both the practitioner and the patient user.

Embracing Technology

When you read those two words together there is reaction that takes place internally. There is a warm fuzzy feeling of “Oh yes, I’d love to snuggle my i-pad” or there is the opposite repulsion questioning “Why would I ever do that?” While the reaction you experience has multiple factors involved in its creation, there is potentially a simple basis that should be considered – your birth date. I am not referring to your Zodiac occurrence but to the year that you were born – the generation that you reside in. There is a distinct difference between the generations as it relates to the views and opinions of technology. From the Boomers and the Gen X’ers who remember when car windows had crank handles, to the Gen Y and Gen Z members who think that an LP record is an antique. Your generation may **direct** your reaction to technology but it does not have to **dictate** your reaction to technology.

Often as PT’s we don’t think that we have time to use technology in our clinical environments however I would suggest that this is because of the limitations that we have set ourselves on what technology is. While checking e-mail and updating social media statuses may not be that appropriate while we wait for the timer on the e-stim to go off, there are ways to embrace technology and utilize it in the clinic to enhance our therapy.

Enhancing Therapy

All that glitters is not gold, and every app on your smart device is not always as useful as it may seem. I doubt that a goniometry app (regardless of how flashy it may be) will really become an industry replacement for our trusty two armed protractor. However, there are an ever growing number of technological advances that I believe do add value to our skills and will truly enhance our therapy.

Enhanced Therapy in PT Education

Remember Index Medicus? If not, ask someone with a lot more gray hair than you and they will regale you with stories of endless hours spent in “the stacks” in a hopeless effort of first of all trying to find the title of an article that may be relevant, before filling in a request form and waiting 2 weeks like an expectant parent, to see if the article in question was actually useful for your assignment. Technology has changed the access to information – both with regard to the

speed and depth of that access. Technology has changed the education system and we need to embrace the increased potential for collaborative work not simply between classmates but between peers in other institutions in other countries. (check out the website used in the Demonstration)

Enhancing Therapy in Patient Care

Patient care used to be confined to the internal facility of the clinic and some poorly photocopied home exercises of stick figures pushing balls or stretching bands. The box of therex flashcards that Boomer and Gen X clinic managers may cherish like their first born, are slowly being replaced by high definition video demonstrations of every imaginable stick figure activity. There are enhancements in the delivery of practice that may allow for greater compliance however it must be remembered that just because there is an app for that, there is no app to replace skilled clinical decision making and empathetic patient care. We may not be in the days of Star Trek with Dr McCoy waving a flashing red light over a fracture to cause healing but we are in a time when technology can be used to assist our efforts in patient education and care.

Enhancing Therapy in The Business Practice

One of the more obvious areas where technology can truly enhance the practice of physical therapy is in the advancements of social media and marketing. If you refer to “The Facebook” or “The Tweeter” then you should attend the session on Saturday morning addressing how we can use technology to enhance the varied aspects of business ownership and practice management. From advancements in communication to social media opportunities that can make start-ups overnight successes, there are ways to embrace technology to enhance therapy as a practice owner.

Demonstration

Over the past 5 years or so there has been an increase in the collaborative efforts of countless academics, students and clinicians to take information that was once the domain of the university and to make it publicly available for all to see. What is most interesting is that not only is this information being presented to a world-wide audience for **review**, it is being presented for **revision**. In 1995 there was a ‘new technology’ created which was designed to foster collaboration between colleagues who did not share the same geographical location. This technology was intended for projects where multiple authors could edit the creative work to culminate in an excellent final product. Welcome to the **wiki**. The most famous wiki is probably Wikipedia – which you can form your own opinion on – but there are some that are specific to the practice of physical therapy.

I want to invite you to peruse one of these sites at your leisure and maybe even consider becoming part of the collaboration and take time to edit or even create content.

The site is <http://www.morphopedics.com>

This site was developed by me as a part of an ongoing Orthopedics course within Marymount University. Rather than have students create written assignments that would get no wider reach

than my office floor, I wanted to introduce tech-savvy Gen Y students to a way that they could influence practice. Morphopedics was the result.

Conclusion

Technology is here to stay. There will be further enhancements, but not much of a retraction. While technology will not ultimately replace the human touch of the physical therapist, there are ways in which the therapist can utilize available technology tools as just that – tools to help them complete their job more easily, or more efficiently. I hope that as you visit the sessions in this track this week that you will identify the technologies that will allow you to go further faster with your work and to eliminate those which may catch your eye with their glittering but ultimately will only distract.

Speakers for the course:

Jason A. Craig, DPhil, MCSP
[jcraig@marymount.edu]

Postscript

Rather than provide copies of powerpoint slides, this handout serves as a summary of the information that was provided in the session in a format that is more easy to read for those who maybe missed the session. Reading a bunch of slides does not often make sense, however I hope that this version of the information provides a little clarity as to the intent of the session.

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References

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