Perspectives on Physical Therapy Education in the New Millennium

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The very existence of the physical therapy profession is dependent upon meeting the need and expectations of society. To meet the needs and expectations of society and to bring our educational system into accordance with the progressive trends of physical therapy education worldwide, the physical therapy profession in Taiwan has launched a series of nation-wide educational meetings since 1997. The most recent event was held from September 1999 to March 2000 in Taipei under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Education, R.O.C. The mission of this 3-stage meeting was to forge a consensus among physical therapy educators and clinicians on a wide range of issues: the design of curriculum, objectives and contents of clinical education, accreditation issues, physical therapy education in the Technological and Vocational Educational System, and issues of the marketplace and the potential oversupply of physical therapists in Taiwan. The following tasks were achieved: 1) formulation of a professional outcome (professional competence and attitude) for entry-level physical therapy education, 2) finalization of a core curriculum for a physical therapy program, 3) establishment of guidelines for the selection of clinical sites and qualification for clinical instructors, 4) institution of general and specific objectives for clinical education as a whole and for subspecialty rotation specifically, and 5) drafting of the standard processes and contents of accreditation for physical therapy clinical education. It was also suggested that the curriculum of those physical therapy programs in the Technological and Vocational Educational System should be held to the same standards as those in the universities and should be geared towards the service of long-term care clients. It was also concluded that the minimum standards for entry-level physical therapy education should require a total of 4 years of professional education in a college or university. Results of a survey launched at the beginning of the 3-stage meeting indicated that the marketplace for physical therapists in Taiwan would be in a state of oversupply within 3 years with the current rate of production. Suggestions were made to bring the issue of physical therapist oversupply to the attention of the proper authorities and to make suitable plans to curb the ill effects of an oversupply of physical therapists in the near future. (Full text in Chinese)

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