

Q&A With Rachel Reoli, Neuro Physical Therapy Resident

Rachel Reoli, PT, DPT, NCS

- **Undergrad:** Allegheny College, bachelor's in neuroscience and psychology
- **Graduate school:** The George Washington University in Washington, DC; doctorate in physical therapy
- **Hometown:** Perryopolis, Pennsylvania
- **Residency completion year:** [neurologic physical therapy residency](#), 2016



What led you to become a physical therapist specializing in neurologic rehabilitation?

My interest in physical medicine and rehabilitation began early, when my grandmother suffered a series of strokes. Her illness triggered my interest in clinical neuroscience; therefore, at Allegheny College I studied neuroscience and psychology.

Following graduation, I continued my training with a fellowship at the National Institutes of Health. While I was at NIH, a good friend was injured in a major car accident, which partially severed her spinal cord at the cervical level. This bolstered my interest in the clinical applications of bench research. After reflecting on how therapy enhanced my friend's physical abilities, I made the decision to pursue my doctorate in physical therapy at The George Washington University. Following successful completion of my doctorate, I continued my physical therapy education with a neurologic physical therapy residency through The Johns Hopkins Hospital and The University of Delaware.

Why did you choose the neurologic physical therapy residency program at Johns Hopkins?

- Introduction to a variety of therapy settings allows you to treat patients in all stages of rehabilitation (outpatient, acute, neurosciences critical care unit, inpatient and pediatrics; clinic days include ataxia, spine, ALS and electromyography).
- Exposure to different mentors provides opportunities to experience different teaching styles and clinical reasoning.
- Coordination with research projects, journal clubs and conferences directly integrates evidence-based practice and clinical care.
- Clinical instructor training and experience at the University of Delaware provides opportunities to share knowledge with students and hone in on educational/teaching tools.
- Diverse health conditions treated at Johns Hopkins provide the opportunity to interact with patients with simple and complex impairments.

What were your general responsibilities as a neurologic physical therapy resident?

- Maintain a full patient caseload on each setting.
- Participate in biweekly mentor co-treat sessions.
- Participate in weekly didactic mentor sessions.
- Participate in a research/quality improvement project.
- Present research at a local/national conference.
- Teach as a clinical instructor at the University of Delaware for a semester.
- Perform as a teaching assistant at the University of Delaware for a semester.
- Attend American Physical Therapy Association Combined Sections Meeting.
- Participate in neuro-consortium courses.

What was your caseload like and what kind of patient populations did you work with?

Residents are required to maintain a full patient caseload on each setting. I experienced a huge variety of patient health conditions, including stroke, spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, tumors, neurodegenerative disorders, psychological disorders and developmental disorders.

If your program included a teaching component, how did it help you become a better therapist?

Performing as a teaching assistant and clinical instructor at the University of Delaware helped to reinforce all the education received throughout the residency.

Name one important thing you've learned from your mentors in the program.

One thing?! Impossible to decide; there are too many to pick from!

Were there activities outside work that helped you make friends and maintain work-life balance?

There are volunteer opportunities available within the hospital (such as stroke prevention, falls prevention, assisted sailing). Baltimore has plenty of opportunities for happy hour, and residents/staff organize events throughout the year.

How has this program helped you grow professionally so far?

The residency has helped me find focus for my career as far as rehabilitation setting, patient population, research interests and teaching interests.

Any advice you would give to someone interested in this program?

Visit the hospital and/or reach out to mentors with questions!

Anything else you would like to share about your experience?

While it may seem like a big commitment, it was a wonderful learning experience filled with great people and countless opportunities.