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Global Perspective: Exceptional Care

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School of Education and Health Sciences

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE: EXCEPTIONAL CARE

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Global Perspective: Exceptional Care



Physical therapy is a rising profession in the United States. It was ranked No. 4 out of 100 “Best Jobs in America” by *Money Magazine*, and the U.S. Department of Labor Statistics predicts employment of physical therapists to increase 27% by 2016.

The same cannot be said for physical therapy in other countries, including China. However, thanks to relationships between the University of Dayton and Nanjing Medical University in Nanjing, China, progress is now possible.

Each year, a group of 10 second and third year students in the Doctor of Physical Therapy program travel to China as part of an exchange program and earn a summer certificate for their involvement. They learn about the similarities and differences between Eastern and Western philosophies of medicine, the kinds of healthcare Mainland China offers, and they

participate in lessons both to teach methods of physical therapy, and learn about new methods.

Meanwhile, faculty from Nanjing Medical University can apply to attend UD and take a semester of classes to learn about physical therapy and use what they’ve learned in education and practice after they return to China. They take classes alongside UD students, are mentored by UD faculty and take part in research collaborations.

The seeds of this exchange program were planted as UD established numerous connections with China’s top universities, including Nanjing University, over the past several years. When UD’s Doctor of Physical Therapy program began in 2006, administration began discussing a potential partnership with Nanjing Medical University.

Philip Anloague, chair of the Department of Physical Therapy, explained there are currently undergraduate four-year programs in rehabilitation medicine, but physical therapy as a degree and profession does not exist in Mainland China.

However, they are seeking to change that. Nanjing Medical University administration reached out to UD and visited campus in 2008 to discuss collaboration with Anloague, President Dan Curran and other UD administration.

Anloague, who has attended the trip every year, said one of the biggest needs was for Nanjing faculty to gain a better understanding of physical therapy, doctoral education and, like the UD students who travel to China, gain insight to the similarities and differences of Eastern and Western medicine.

One of the biggest differences is physical therapy in the U.S. tends to be more exercise-based and gets the patient involved, while China uses more natural and traditional methods like dietary remedies and performing acupuncture, tai chi, massage and other practices. Anloague said Chinese rehabilitation tends to be more passive for the patient.

While the Nanjing faculty has the opportunity to learn from students and faculty at UD, there is plenty of opportunity to share information when students travel to Nanjing as well. Both UD students and Nanjing students often prepare presentations for each other based on what they already know about methods of physical therapy, and what they'd like to learn. Beyond the technicalities, both groups get the chance to work with a diverse population, while practicing their professionalism and communication skills across the language and cultural barrier.



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Anloague and other UD faculty lecture and conduct medical education seminars for students and educators from all over China. UD students serve as lab instructors to provide extra assistance, and break up into small groups to review the demonstrations. UD students also attend lectures to learn about Chinese rehabilitation methods that aren't prevalent in the U.S.

Members of UD and Nanjing administration take time to meet to discuss more possibilities for the exchange program, like offering certificate programs for physical therapists in China. Someday, Anloague said, the dream is to offer a doctoral physical therapy program in China^¾whether UD helps establish a program or UD offers a degree program there.

So far, Nanjing faculty who have studied in the program at UD have risen to prominent positions in education and hospital systems in China, and UD students have carried what they've learned into their careers.

Daniel Suckow '15 attended the trip in 2014 and the "global experience" he received has served him well as a physical therapist for Fidelity Health Care in Dayton.

"I had the chance to learn about Chinese techniques and experience them firsthand, so that helps me explain them to patients here who may be curious about trying them," he said. "The common motto is 'think outside the box,' but going to China helped me grow my box."

Anloague echoed Suckow's thoughts on how students can benefit from such an immersive experience.



“Individuals who are open to service and interested in working with diverse cultures possess characteristics that go very well with the delivery of healthcare,” he said. “Their broadened understanding of the world helps them to become better physical therapists.”

By Erin Callahan '15

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